

ABSTRACT

Name: Jeanne E. Okrasinski

Department: Teaching and
Learning

Title: A Study of the Relationship of Middle School Team Ideology and
School Achievement Status

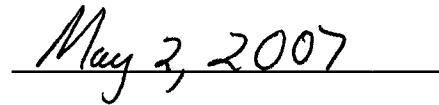
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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Improvement of achievement in middle schools is an ongoing issue that all districts face. Teaching teams are used in over 80% of all districts across the United States for middle schools. Research on the relationship between teaming and school achievement is needed. The current study investigated whether a teacher ideology had any relationship with school achievement status.

Participants were given a questionnaire for demographic purposes and a q-sort to identify ideological preference. Paperwork was completed at mandatory faculty meetings, which provided an acceptable rate of return of the packets. Participants completed the paperwork only one time. Demographic variables, including certification, teaching experience, teaming experience, and age, were used to identify patterns in ideological preference. Ideology for each of the 183 staff members was assigned from the results of the four-question q-sort. A total of 138 teamed teachers were then analyzed for congruency status among all team members. Using all staff data, a primary ideological classification was also derived for each school. Schools were separated by achievement status as indicated on Illinois School Report Cards from 2003, 2004, and 2005.

This study revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship ($p < .024$) between ideological congruence of teamed teachers and school achievement status. Achievement occurred more often at schools where teacher teams were organized by congruent ideologies, without regard for which ideology was expressed by the group of teachers.

Data revealed no statistically significant relationships among the demographic variables and ideology. Interesting findings did occur, however, related to teaching experience. Those teachers that had over twenty-five years of experience held a distinct majority of all staffers who self-identified Critical Theory as their primary ideology. While not statistically significant ($p < .056$), the adjusted residual was $|2.03|$ and warrants future investigation.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM IDEOLOGY
AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT STATUS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

BY

JEANNE E. OKRASINSKI

DEKALB, ILLINOIS

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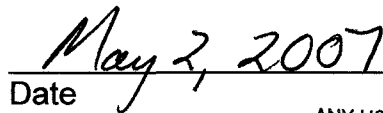
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DEDICATION

To Jeff, for all his continuous support and encouragement throughout the endless
days and nights of this quest

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Educators throughout history have been developing theories and testing hypotheses to better the learning environment for students. The middle school movement is the current theory being promoted and practiced to some degree in a majority of public schools across the United States for the education of students aged 10-14 years old (Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2002). The middle school philosophy draws from such early education leaders as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebels, who in the 1700-1800s emphasized learning as both personal and active. Although these ideas were geared towards early learning, the concepts are similar to student-centered learning, involving the students in their own learning (Scott, 2006).

As these European ideas crossed the ocean, G. Stanley Hall addressed the United States with the concept that the developmental needs of the early adolescent were not being met in the education system of that time. Hall and others prompted the creation of a new standard of grade distribution, creating the junior and senior high schools. The first junior high school appeared in 1909 in Ohio, servicing grades 7-9. Unfortunately, the junior high schools did not live up to the expectations of creating an environment in which the needs

of the early adolescent would be met. Reform was again called for in the 1960s and is still in process as we progress through the early years of the new millennium (Anfara, 2001).

Through the current reform movement, new terminology was created to discuss this particular time in a child's schooling. Junior high was now replaced by middle school; the students who would attend middle school were now identified as typically in grades 5-8. Middle level education would identify schools organized under the concepts of curricular and instructional practices designed specifically to meet the needs of students between the ages of 10-14 (Kellough & Carjuzaa, 2006). The general philosophy of such schools would be based on characteristics such as:

- Centered on the unique needs and characteristics of the early adolescent;
- Student-centered rather than subject-centered;
- Include provision for both pre-service and in-service teacher training to meet the widely varying exceptionalities in interests, abilities, and experiences of students in transition;
- Accept and respect each student and teacher as an individual of worth and dignity in his or her own right. Celebrate differences and encourage creativity and freedom from expression in keeping with ethnic genealogy and background experiences; and
- Require the same teachers to share the same students over the same block of time in the same part of the building.

(National Middle School Association, 2001)

In addition to the changes at the organizational and instructional levels, the middle school movement promoted a specialized training of teachers geared towards working with early adolescents (Kellough & Carjuzaa, 2006).

Among the variety of topics included in this training, teaming of teachers is critical for the pre-service teacher to understand. Teaming is the heart of the middle school movement, as it is the central piece to creating learning communities and a positive school climate. The National Middle School Association (NMSA) and the Carnegie Council have both established lists of elements crucial to the success of middle schools and middle school students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 1995).

As evidenced in both *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) and *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1995), good instruction is made possible whenever there is a positive school climate. A positive climate is characterized by creativity, risk taking, cooperation, trust, respect, and most importantly, a feeling of safety (Erb, 2001). Effective teaming relationships contribute to the development of these attributes of a positive school environment (Bullock & Pedersen, 1999; Coe, 2003; Dickinson & Erb, 1997; George & Alexander, 2003; Kasak, 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2001; Schamber, 1999). As teaming has grown in popularity over the past decades, currently incorporated into approximately 80% of public middle schools (Rottier, 2000; Valentine, Clark, Hackmann & Petzko, 2002; Valentine & Whitaker, 1997), it is vital that studies are conducted to examine the most effective construction of the teacher teams. Improved construction of teacher teams could allow for greater teacher effectiveness.

Creating and sustaining a sense of community at the middle level is a key element in the success of the school and its students. Sergiovanni (1994)

notes that community building should be seen as an evolving process that starts with a state of mind – a likeness of thought including such areas as shared values or conceptions. It is this thought that leads to Manning's (1999) statement that "...in many aspects the middle school philosophy and a sense of community are synonymous" (p.105), which reflects the concepts and philosophical beliefs espoused in *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1995). The transformation of our middle schools into caring communities enables the teachers and students to pursue academics to a greater extent as student needs in the affective and social domains are consistently met.

A professional learning community (PLC) is the goal of the teaming relationship. The National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT) (2001) defines the PLC as "a group of educators committed to working together collaboratively as learners to improve achievement for all students in a school" (p. 4). DuFour and Eaker (1998) relate that PLCs "are guided by a clear, commonly held, shared purpose for student learning, feel a sense of collective responsibility for student learning and collaborate with one another to promote student learning" (p. 83). In the literature surrounding the development of learning communities, importance is attached to shared purpose and vision (Beck, 1999; Erb, 1997; Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Hord, 1997; Manouchehri, 2001; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Schaps, 2003; Westheimer, 1999). Unfortunately, the connection between teachers' common purpose and promoting student learning is not well researched. Therefore, it is the contention of this study that in order to

enhance the context of learning and advance student achievement, the teacher teams must be created in such a way that community is more easily achieved through an understanding of each individual team member's curriculum ideology.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine individual middle school teachers' curriculum ideologies and the relationship between ideological congruence among school faculty and teams, and school academic achievement. Common values and mission have been identified as core elements of effective PLCs; however, there are disagreements in the reality of forming teams around these principles. The question has been raised as to whether a team should be constructed with diversity in mind (Kasak, 1998) or with a homogenous curriculum ideology (Joseph, Bravmann, Windschitl, Mikel & Green, 2000). To this end, the research was conducted in the context of the interdisciplinary teacher team, as well as the school as a whole, using state-identified school achievement status as a differentiating factor. Five middle schools within a large urban district were included in this study. Other schools within this district, using a K-8 format, were excluded, as they did not participate in the teaming structure central to the middle school philosophy, which is the basis for this study.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What curriculum ideologies are expressed by middle school staff members?
2. Is there a relationship in expressed ideologies among staff members based upon:
 - a. Initial teacher certification
 - b. Teaching experience
 - c. Teaming experience
 - d. Age
3. What is the nature of ideological congruency within teams and schools?
4. Is there a relationship between school achievement status and the congruency of expressed curriculum ideology among teacher teams?

The research questions were addressed by a quantitative study using a questionnaire and a q-sort (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006) to discover if there was a relationship between homogenous teams and positive school achievement status. The instruments were aligned to characteristics outlined by Eisner (2002) including the curriculum ideologies of Orthodoxy, Rational Humanism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, and Critical Theory.

Conceptual Framework

This study used the Conceptual Framework for team functioning originally designed by Trimble (1995), with adaptations for the specifics of team make-up and student achievement (see Figure 1). Eisner's ideologies will be used to explore the "Process" component of this system.

Within a systemic framework, this study examined the existing factors (inputs) that individual staff members represent in the schools. This included

each teacher's initial certification (an indicator of teacher preparation coursework), teaching experience, teaming experience, age, and ideology. The focal point is to discover what relationship these variables have, if any, with team functioning and school achievement. Within the systems model, Team Functioning occurs in the process stage. This researcher was intrigued with uncovering the mysteries of effective teaming.

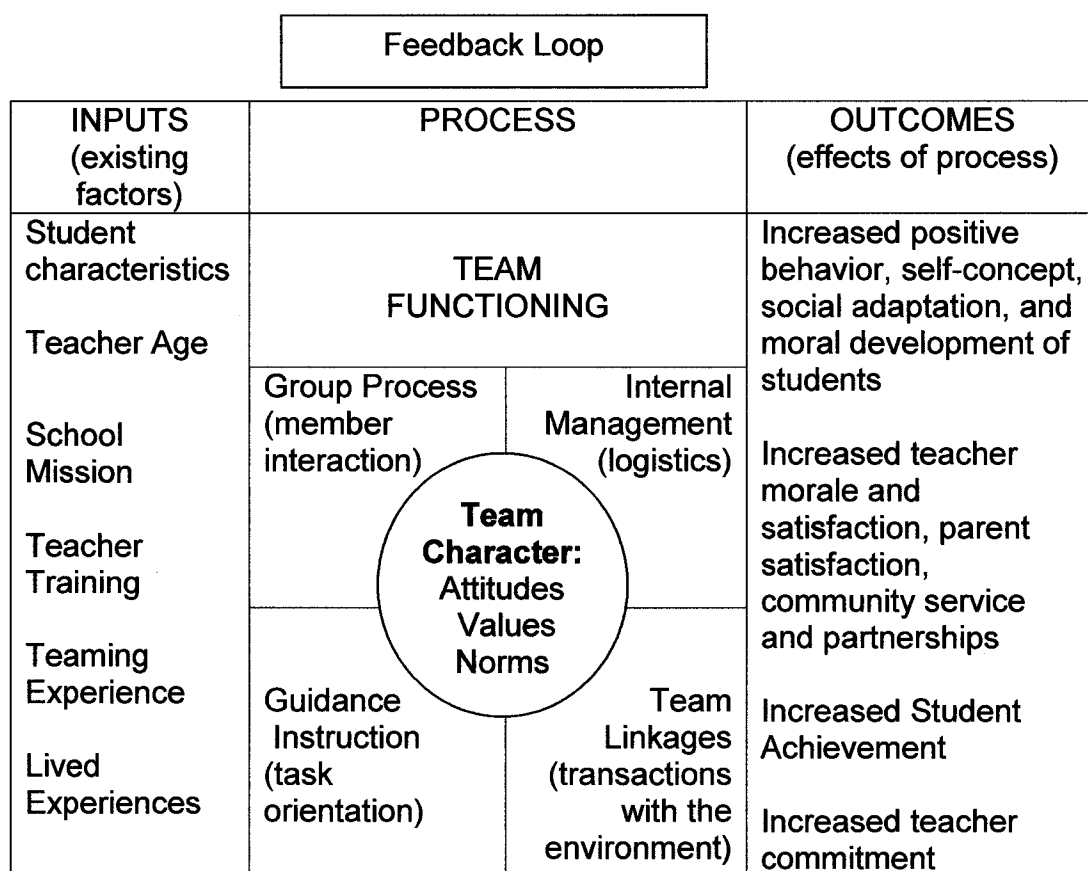


Figure 1. Systemic Framework for Variables of Team Performance.
Adapted from Trimble, 1995

Ideologies describe the individual teacher's beliefs about the aims and goals of the education system, as well as the role of the teacher and curriculum within the classroom and school at large. These beliefs guide the teacher in decision-making and lead to agreement or disagreement among team members whose goals and ideals may be from a different ideological camp (Achinstein, 2002; Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001). Consequently, ideology could influence all four aspects of team functioning identified in Trimble's framework. The question to be investigated is whether or not there is a relationship between congruence of team character, identified through ideology, and the achievement status for the school. Team functioning is critical to the expected outcome, as it pertains to the interaction of both teachers and students in the learning process, provides the basis for team management, affects the team's role in the school, and most importantly, establishes the very foundation of the team's values and goals for the school year.

Ideologies are the tacit rationales for why we do what we do in education (Eisner, 2002). For example, most districts or schools establish a mission statement. The teacher in turn may establish goals for the classroom. These goals, visions and missions stem from an individual's ideology.

According to Eisner (2002), ideologies are "belief systems that provide the value premises for which decisions about practical educational matters are made" (p. 47). Teachers' beliefs concerning the role of the teacher, the

essentials of curriculum, the aims of education, and the specific knowledge to be taught to students are critical to understanding an expressed ideology.

Often, teachers innately follow a frame of reference without overtly stating their ideology; yet ideology is evident in planning and decision-making processes. As Zimpher (2002) relates, all teachers are actually theoreticians who try out thousands of theories every day.

This study chose five of Eisner's (2002) ideologies to determine middle school teachers' individual belief systems. These included Orthodoxy, Rational Humanism, Progressivism, Reconstructionism, and Critical Theory. Though there are more ideologies than the five chosen for this study, these five ideologies represent the most prominent views of teachers according to previously completed research (Eisner, 2002, p. 56). The sixth and final ideology that was not included in the study is Cognitive Pluralism.

Cognitive Pluralism is an old idea, dating from at least Aristotle's time, but only in the last twenty years has the conception gained mainstream recognition. This is seen in Gardner's (2006) multiple intelligences: a theory that most pre-service teachers have experienced in methods of teaching coursework. The problem with Cognitive Pluralism and the reason for its omission from this study is two-fold: "No consortium has been created to promote or implement programs reflecting a cognitively pluralistic orientation to curriculum" and "The programs needed to implement a cognitively pluralistic approach to curriculum are scarce" (Eisner, 2002, p. 82).

Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy, referred to as Ortho for tables and coding in this study, is associated with religion and is also known by the title of Religious Orthodoxy. This ideology is mainly found within private and parochial school settings that strive to inculcate students with the knowledge of God as first priority, in addition to the tenets of basic education – reading, writing, and arithmetic. This religious foundation defines the “content, aims and conditions of educational practice” within the schools (Eisner, 2002, pp. 56-57). Within this ideology there are differences due to the different nature of religions that would be following this tradition. Consider the teachings based upon Catholicism, Judaism, or Islam as they practice the canon of their beliefs and how this is transferred through the educational system.

Isolation from outside influences is important to Orthodoxy ideologists so that instruction of the student may follow a precise pathway toward enlightenment in whatever faith is being pursued. Orthodoxy includes not only religious groups, but also any group that fosters a mindset that is different from mainstream public education (Eisner, 2002, pp. 61-62). For anyone attempting to instill in students a certain set of goals and values, one of the easiest ways to accomplish this goal is to be separated from society. As Eisner relates, “the aim of an orthodoxy is to shape the views of others so that they are compatible with the views contained in the orthodoxy” (p. 58).

Education of students follows a certain curricular path. Orthodoxy ideologists believe that there is a set of knowledge to be learned that has been gathered, organized, and systematized which would focus on past and permanent studies, mastery of facts, and universal truths established by the orthodoxy. The facts and knowledge would center on classical subjects and literary analysis. This information is constant and would help the students develop rational thinking skills along orthodox lines and would explicitly teach traditional values (Poetter & Badiali, 2001).

Rational Humanism

Rational Humanists are not believers in a “skill and drill” education. Rational Humanism (RH) places emphasis on the development of a “critical understanding of the values and premises that underlie important works” (Eisner, 2002, p. 65). The Great Books campaign is a prime example of Rational Humanism ideology – expose students to the exceptional works of the past in order to direct their futures. Students are to grasp the broad social concepts from the books and translate those ideas into practical use for society. In this way, students develop in-depth reasoning skills that would be of much more worth than memorizing facts about the books (Eisner, 2002).

Just as Orthodoxy believes there was a certain curriculum that should be followed, Rational Humanism proposes a national curriculum so that every student in public school is given the same opportunities to succeed in life, no matter where the student lives or the socio-economic situation of the family.

Education is the savior of society in that when people know how to think and develop rational thinking, each person will be able to do and provide for him or herself. This national curriculum would not include electives since all students need to experience the same coursework and the education experts know what the coursework should be (Eisner, 2002, p. 66).

One problem is especially troubling to Rational Humanists. High-stakes testing is anathema to the problem-solving and thinking skills espoused in this ideology. Students cannot demonstrate their abilities to reason and debate with a piece of paper and bubbles to fill in. Assessment should be authentic and appropriate to each student (Eisner, 2002).

Within the school setting, Rational Humanism would promote the intellectual growth of the individual and educating the competent person for the benefit of humanity. Academic subjects would focus on essential skills centered on the “three Rs” within the major content areas. Mastery of concepts and the principles taught in each subject is critical to the success of each student. Finally, the teachers are viewed as authority figures since they have expertise in the subjects being taught (Poetter & Badiali, 2001).

Progressivism

John Dewey and his followers are known as Progressivists. Progressivism (Prog) changed over time, with two distinct paths emerging for education. One path focused “on the nature of human experience and intelligence, the other in social reform” (Eisner, 2002, p. 67). Some of the

social reform ideas contributed to the development of the Reconstructionist ideology, which will be discussed later.

Growth and the process by which growth occurs are found through biological processes and also cultural resources. For Dewey, growth means developing intelligence. Intelligence is then displayed through learning and experience. Students should experience the world in order to grasp and objectively “deal with ever more complex and demanding problems. What grows through this process of increasing competence is the child’s intelligence” (Eisner, 2002, p. 68). The education system needs to foster growth through the experiences allowed in the classroom. This leads to the understanding that both mind and spirit needed to be attended to within the lessons. The emotional component is recognized as important to intellectual growth.

Problem-based learning is central to the concept of Progressivism. Students are able to develop problems and determine answers to these problems because they are motivated to learn. The teacher needs to know the students in order to suggest what problems the students might be interested in and then help to guide in the discovery of the answers. Teaching takes on the look of an art form, as there may not be a set of standards for each student to follow. Instead, “each child was to be a custom job” (Eisner, 2002, p. 70). Teachers would also be creating curriculum as the course went along and the students developed an interest in a topic.

The Progressive classroom promotes democratic ideals and social living. It centers on student interests and fosters creative self-learning based on real-world problems. Naturally, these problems are explored in an interdisciplinary format. With teachers acting as guides for problem solving and scientific inquiry, students experience a living-learning process using active and relevant learning strategies to promote intellectual and emotional growth (Poetter & Badiali, 2001).

Reconstructionism

Reconstructionism (Recon) does not hold the current education system in the USA in high regard. In place of the current system, Reconstructionists believe that “to provide children with a decent educational environment requires a reconceptualization of how we think about educational programs, who develops them and who they are for” (Eisner, 2002, p.78).

The current curriculum in schools is prescribed and does not allow for individual interests. The focus on standards and high-stakes testing to maintain our “competitive edge” dominates the instructional patterns and assessment of all grades. Reconstructionists would say that “what is missing from American schools...is a deep respect for personal purpose, lived experience, for the life of an imagination, and for those forms of understanding that resist dissection and measurement” (Eisner, 2002, p. 77). Lived experience and imagination are core components to intellectual growth and

development that should be fostered in the schools, without the memorization and fact-retelling associated with some instructional practices used in schools.

Teachers in this ideology strive to have their students develop skills useful to improving society. This is done through an examination of social, economic, and political problems, present and future, on a national as well as international level. Since education is an agent for change, the focus is on skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate problems of society, for both today and the future. Teachers also serve as agents for reform as they help students become aware of problems confronting all humankind (Poetter & Badiali, 2001).

Critical Theory

According to Critical Theorists (CT), the traditional education system does not adequately service all students; rather, its practices lean toward that of the “power elite” through the hidden curriculum (Eisner, 2002, p. 73). Schools should prepare all students to develop whatever aims and goals each student would find interesting. Topics current to students should be explored, such as racism, sexism, or class exploitation, so that all students will be critical thinkers able to build a future based on democratic principles (Eisner, 2002, p 75). Critical Theory is typically negative about the condition of education, but does not usually offer any models for change for the system. The closest that

Critical Theory comes to providing a model for change actually stems from the social reform side of Progressivism.

Change in the classroom centers on the construction of active citizens who will fight for social change and seek self- and social empowerment. Lessons support civic literacy, participation, and political responsibility. At the core of this transformation is a public philosophy that puts equality, liberty, and human life at the center of democracy and citizenship. Since teachers create democratic classrooms for social transformation, they empower students to question how knowledge is produced and distributed. Questioning authority and texts is encouraged, as it leads to the social justice platform (Poetter & Badiali, 2001).

Background and Rationale

This section will briefly touch on the subject of community among teachers and proceed with a discussion on the evolution of middle schools, teacher preparation, and finally, student achievement.

Community

Within the middle school concept, planning and decision-making processes are typically shared among team members. In this regard, a teacher's curriculum ideology may influence the productivity of the team, collaboration of the members, and overall community established among the team members (Arhar, 1997; Balach & Syzmanski, 2003; Hoffman, 2003;

White, 1997). As Dewey (1966) states, "The school must itself be a community life" (p. 358).

Developing community among teachers is an important first step to developing community among students (Arhar, 1997; Deemer, McCotter, & Smith, 2003; Westheimer, 1999). Progress within the teacher teams may be affected by the ability of the group to process through programmatic planning and decision-making (Brown, 2001; Joseph et al., 2000; Hoffman, 2003; Westheimer, 1999; White, 1997). If teachers cannot create and sustain a healthy community, students should not be expected to exemplify these attributes either.

The Evolution of Middle Schools

Prior to the middle school concept, the junior high school served to prepare students for high school by employing the same organizational structures that are still utilized in today's high schools. The creation of the junior high system set the stage for the middle school concept by introducing ideas such as:

- Implementing the 6-7-8 or 7-8-9 grade configuration;
 - Expanding and enriching the curriculum by providing a variety of exploratory programs; and
 - Initiating guidance-oriented homeroom programs.
- (Forte & Schurr, 1993)

The work of the early pioneers in early adolescent education opened the door for affective and cognitive educational programs to join together in

creating a secure environment for growth. This translated into the grassroots effort called the “middle school movement” (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Middle schools began appearing in the 1950s, replacing the junior high model, but did not see expanded growth in numbers until the mid to late 1960s. Educators were becoming increasingly aware of specific social, emotional, and educational needs of the early adolescents, who are not quite teenagers, but also are no longer little children.

In 1961, Gertrude Noar expressed this desire to reach her students by stating:

The responsibility of the school instructional program was to meet four needs which related to youngsters' emotions:

1. The need for security and affection, which creates a feeling of being wanted and a sense of belonging.
2. The need for recognition and reward.
3. The need for achievement and success.
4. The need for fun and adventure – new experiences, both educational and recreational.

(p. 32)

These elements are much easier to establish and maintain if the teacher-to-student ratio is small, which is yet another goal of the middle school concept (Erb, 2001; George, 2001; George & Lounsbury, 2000; Kasak, 1998; Mertens, Flowers & Mulhall, 2001). Through the continuous efforts of teachers, the middle school movement became a powerful reform agenda item among leading educators.

With the surge in the number of middle schools that occurred in the 1960s came the need to create a “voice” for middle level educators. The Council on the Emerging Adolescent Learner was created in 1969 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in order to encourage and strengthen those working in the middle. The National Middle School Association (NMSA) soon followed in 1973 (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Since that time, position papers and research have sparked not only reform, but also innovations which have led to policies and procedures that are unique to middle school.

As early as the mid-1970s, middle schools were well established throughout the Eastern United States (Anfara, 2001). The middle schools were “designed to correct the deficiencies of the junior high school” (Lipka et al., 1998). These early models attempted to initiate the interdisciplinary teaming approach as well as curriculum integration. To enhance instruction, block periods and flexible scheduling also were considered.

These ideas were not new, but they previously had not been envisioned within the interconnections of the classroom and the curriculum as they now appear within the middle school (Anfara, 2001; Dickinson, 2001; Lipka et al., 1998; Manning & Bucher, 2000; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). The middle school concept spread, albeit without uniformity of implementation, across the nation (Clark & Clark, 1997; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Dickinson & Butler, 2001; Queen, 1999), and is currently the accepted practice for educating early

adolescents in approximately 80% of the school districts within the United States (Valentine et al., 2002).

Teacher Preparation

Middle school teacher certification and standards for pre-professional development continue to garner attention within the states. Currently 44 states offer some sort of endorsement or certification for middle level practitioners, indicating the belief that a background in early adolescence is significant in the preparation of highly qualified and effective teachers (Gaskill, 2002). Illinois is one of the states that has developed a middle level endorsement for either the elementary or secondary teaching certificate. In addition to specific coursework for prospective middle level teachers, Illinois has endorsed a set of standards for institutions of higher education, proposing the development of certain attributes and a set of knowledge for these teachers. Among the standards are concerns for collaboration within the teacher team and school as a community (Illinois State Board of Education, 2003a).

Presently, middle schools continue to seek reform in organizational practices to improve working conditions for professionals and enhance instruction for early adolescents. Nationally and locally, school districts, teachers, and parents are concerned that their students are not always achieving the minimum established standards in core curriculum areas. Previous research conducted on middle school practices included the area of

teaming, but according to Trimble (2003), “No national study has been conducted of the relationships between student achievement data and middle school factors” (paragraph 1). Because this study may present new information regarding the relationship between interdisciplinary teaming and student achievement, it has the potential to hold significance for middle school reform.

Student Achievement

Student achievement is again a focus of local and state scrutiny. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB) (2002) requirements for highly qualified teachers, including evidence of knowledge in the content areas, recognizes that students need well prepared teachers for every classroom. NCLB mandates that teachers complete a certain number of credit hours for each subject they intend to teach.

In Illinois, efforts have been made to identify achievement levels of all schools. This is accomplished through the academic watch list system. According to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) (ISBE, 2002), schools are identified based upon their composite Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) or Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) scores.

At the elementary and middle school levels, the ISAT “measures individual student achievement relative to the Illinois Learning Standards. The results give parents, teachers, and schools one measure of student learning

and school performance” (ISBE, 2006). Different grades take different subject-area tests. “In spring 2005, students in grades 3, 5, and 8 took the ISAT in reading and mathematics. Students in grades 4 and 7 took the ISAT in science” (ISBE, 2006). These scores are then tabulated for individual, school, and district results so that the state receives an overall picture of the effectiveness of the public elementary and middle school systems.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination is given every spring to 11th grade students to assess their mastery of the Illinois Learning Standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social science. According to the ISBE, the standards “are comprised of the knowledge and skills Illinois citizens believe students will need to be successful in life” (ISBE, 2001b). This test covers all core content areas, including writing. Total time for the test is approximately 7 hours, split between two days of testing (ISBE, 2001b). Since the PSAE also includes ACT aspects for college entrance use, “students who want to improve their scores may retake the entire PSAE in their senior year” (ISBE, 2001b). For this study, only the ISAT will be used to report school achievement since middle school students do not take the PSAE.

Schools are assigned to four categories based on the state test results. These categories are: Achieving; Underachieving; Academic Early Warning List; Academic Watch List (ISBE, 2002). These distinctions have no grounding in poverty levels or other demographic descriptors. The system is based solely on high-stakes testing results. Parents and interested parties are informed of school status through the local school's report card, another

program initiated to keep the community updated on the success/failure of the school system in Illinois.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it has the potential to impact the practice of middle school team creation, which may lead to increased student achievement. This study has the potential to assist underachieving schools/districts by suggesting a framework for the reconstruction of teams. Higher education professionals will find this study useful in preparation programs for future teachers as professors include coursework concerning collaboration and teaming within their courses, particularly in the context of middle school teaching. The study may also hold implications for state and accrediting bodies' review of middle school programs. Most importantly, this study provides a framework for linking theory to practice within the middle school philosophy, suggesting new designs for creating effective learning environments for early adolescents which may in turn affect student achievement levels.

Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to two primary limitations. First, the study participants were confined to one school district which houses six middle schools. Not all teachers were willing to participate, thereby limiting the number of complete team information sets available for analysis.

Secondly, because this was an urban district, the results may not be typical for rural or suburban districts. Due to the relatively small number of teachers typically employed at the middle school level in rural districts, establishing a diversity of available teachers to create the ideological combinations necessary for effective teams may prove difficult. It is the contention of this study, however, that the principle of creating teams based upon an individual's curriculum ideology is transferable to all schools. This speaks to an ecological external validity concern as identified by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002).

The findings of the study must be interpreted within the context of these limitations.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have specialized meaning within the context of the study:

Academic Early Warning List (AEWL): "Schools are eligible for placement on the Academic Early Warning List when their composite ISAT or PSAE scores show that fewer than 50% of tests met or exceeded state standards for two years in a row" (ISBE, 2002). Schools in this category will be known as Underachieving for the remainder of this study.

Achieving Schools: These schools are identified by a minimum of 50% of tested students meeting or exceeding the adequate yearly progress standards.

Community: “A community or a sense of community in the middle level school is a continuing, evolving process whereby early adolescents and educators interact and work collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust, belongingness, and respect toward shared common interests and commitment to common educational and developmental goals” (Manning, 1999, p. 96).

Core Teachers: Teachers who instruct students in the subjects of Science, Social Sciences, Language Arts, and Math are generally given the distinction of core teachers (Wiles & Bondi, 2001).

Curriculum Ideology: Eisner (2002) states, “Curriculum ideologies are defined as beliefs about what schools should teach, for what ends, and for what reasons. Ideologies, in general, are belief systems that provide the value premises from which decisions about practical educational matters are made” (p. 47).

Encore Teachers: Teachers from non-core classes, such as Art, Music, and Physical Education, are identified as encore teachers (NMSA, 2001).

Interdisciplinary Teaching Teams: The interdisciplinary team is typically composed of 1 teacher from each core academic content area (e.g., language arts, math, science, social studies, and reading). Encore teachers are seldom included in the interdisciplinary teaming structure. (Clark & Clark, 1997; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Hackmann et al, 2002; NMSA, 2001).

Middle School Movement: “The notion that greater and more specific attention be given to the special needs of early adolescents. Basic to the movement is

the belief that middle school teachers need specialized training to work most effectively with young adolescents” (Kellough & Carjuzaa, 2006, p. 8).

Middle Level Schools: Middle level education is the segment of schooling that encompasses early adolescence, typically between the ages of 10-15. Grade configuration may be a combination of grades 5-9, with the most common type housing grades 6-8. The most important feature of middle level education is the nature of the program stressing all aspects of academic, social, psychomotor, and affective achievement for early adolescents, wherever they are housed as the crucial factor (NMSA, 1995).

Specialist Teachers: For the purposes of this study, this group of teachers includes resource teachers and school counselors.

Teamed Teachers: Instructional staff that are assigned the same group of students for the school year. This group of teachers typically will plan and discuss student issues throughout the year. This group may include core, encore, and specialists depending upon the construction of teams within various schools.

Underachieving Schools: These schools are identified by fewer than 50% of tested students meeting or exceeding the adequate yearly progress standards. It is possible to be underachieving, yet not on the AEWL due to the two consecutive years requirement. For this study, any school not meeting the 50th percentile will be known as an Underachieving school.

These terms are utilized consistently with these definitions throughout the reporting of this study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study by providing a brief background on the current state of middle school education and establishing the research questions for this study. Chapter 2 comprises a review of current middle school philosophy, team development, effects of community in schools, and curriculum ideologies in current literature. Chapter 3 discusses the methods and procedures established for the conduct of the study. Chapter 4 presents findings from data gathered on the teachers, schools and district used in this study. Chapter 5 concludes this report with a summary of the study, as well as conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future use and research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Much has been written concerning the education of early adolescents. Arguments have been researched and discussed regarding the structure, organization and curriculum offered during the middle school years. Historically, ideology has also had different interpretations as new ideas arise and old ones lose popularity.

For the benefit of this study, a review of the middle school philosophy will be presented, followed by the current conception of the middle school and its integration into the public school system. Theories behind teacher teaming and the development of the professional learning community are vital. Ideology of team members has been the focus of relatively few research studies in the last decade. Some studies have attempted to uncover the pros and cons of teams consisting of homogeneous or heterogeneous ideologies. This chapter also will discuss student achievement and the effect of teamed teachers' differing abilities to work together, followed by research in teacher preparation and a chapter summary.

Middle School Philosophy Beginnings

This section addresses the origins of the middle school concept, its development by the NMSA, and its current integration in schools.

The middle school philosophy in some form or fashion has been accepted, modified, rebuked, and heralded since the early 1900s. Though called a junior high school originally, educators and theorists were concerned with the academic, physical, moral, and affective development of early adolescent students in the early 1900s (Beane, 2001; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Unfortunately, due to a boom of high school students at the same time, little was done to advance the “specialness” of early adolescents and the junior high became its namesake and paralleled the traditional high school programming and curriculum. Fortunately, all was not lost, as pockets of educators at that time held to beliefs that the current state of educating early adolescents was not adequate to meet the full range of needs expressed by this population (Eichhorn, 1991; Wiles & Bondi, 2001).

In the mid-1940s another push was made to spread the word of revolution. Six functions for the junior high school were identified by William Gruhn and Harl Douglass (1947), known currently as the classical functions (Dickinson, 2001). Many of these six functions became the basis for the middle school movement. They included integrating learning, encouraging exploration, guiding development, individualizing the learning experience,

promoting healthy social development, and bridging learning from the elementary years to the high school years.

By 1960, "it was widely accepted that the junior high school was largely dysfunctional" (Wiles & Bondi, 2001, p. 11). The voice of change sprang from Dr. William Alexander, a student of the progressive school of thought. Alexander drew his ideas from the original junior high school literature and expanded these concepts to the theory in place today. Unlike the early 1900s, when the junior high school revolution fizzled quickly in lieu of greater high school demands, people were ready to listen and accept Alexander's ideas for school reform. Once the idea took root, middle schools emerged rapidly, such that by 1973 there were approximately 2300 middle schools. Districts continued this speedy change, as evidenced by only 13% of intermediate schools not claiming middle school identification in 1995 (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). With the majority of schools on board with the middle school concept, the logical next step was to educate the community and future teachers in the middle school concept.

The Middle School Concept

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) is a voice of power that seeks to push an agenda of growth and sustainability for the concept of the middle school. The NMSA has been joined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), a Carnegie Foundation report, in lobbying and authoring ideas

proclaiming what all middle level professionals should believe and execute in the best interest of the students. NMSA published their authoritative declaration of a developmentally appropriate middle school in *This We Believe*, originally published in 1995. *Turning Points* also gave recommendations for middle schools to implement in order to best serve the early adolescent population. Table 1 provides a summary comparison of the core values from the two documents.

The teaming concept is a critical piece to the “organizing relationships for learning” component of the recommendations from Table 1. Jackson and Davis (2000) believe that strong teams are the result of careful planning in “team size, composition, time for planning, and continuity” (p. 24) and that these teams regularly assess the types of interactions among students and faculty members. In addition, strong teams expect students to achieve the high standards that have been established and review teaching methods to help ensure success for every student.

Current Integration of the Middle School Concept

The problem is that not all middle schools across the nation have implemented the entire philosophy and are choosing different bits and pieces to put into practice in their districts. The result has been unsuccessful programs, unhappy parents, teachers and administrators, and schools now looking to reverse the decision to become a middle school and return to a

Table 1

Comparison of *Turning Points* and *This We Believe*

<i>Turning Points 2000</i> (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 25)	<i>This We Believe</i> (NMSA 1995, p. 11)
Teach a curriculum grounded in standards, relevant to adolescents' concerns, and based on how students learn best, and use a mix of assessment methods	<p>A balanced curriculum based on the needs of early adolescents</p> <p>Evaluation procedures compatible with the nature of early adolescent needs</p> <p>A full exploratory curriculum</p>
Use instructional methods that prepare all students to achieve high standards	<p>Cooperative planning</p> <p>Varied instructional strategies</p> <p>Continuous progress for students</p>
Organize relationships for learning	A range of organization arrangements (flexible structures)
Govern democratically, involving all school staff members	
Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching early adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development	Educators knowledgeable about and committed to early adolescents
Provide a safe and healthy school environment	<p>Positive school climate</p> <p>Comprehensive advising and counseling</p>
Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development	

junior high school distinction (Brown 2001; Dickinson, 2001; Dickinson & Butler, 2001; Gable & Manning, 1997; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001).

As Figure 2 demonstrates, the middle school student is a complex being with needs from four sources, including curriculum, instruction, organization, and support services. Without a balanced and fully implemented middle school program, one or more of the four dimensions will be inadequate. The concept of teaming addresses each of these dimensions. The students are housed in smaller groups than the traditional junior high structure.

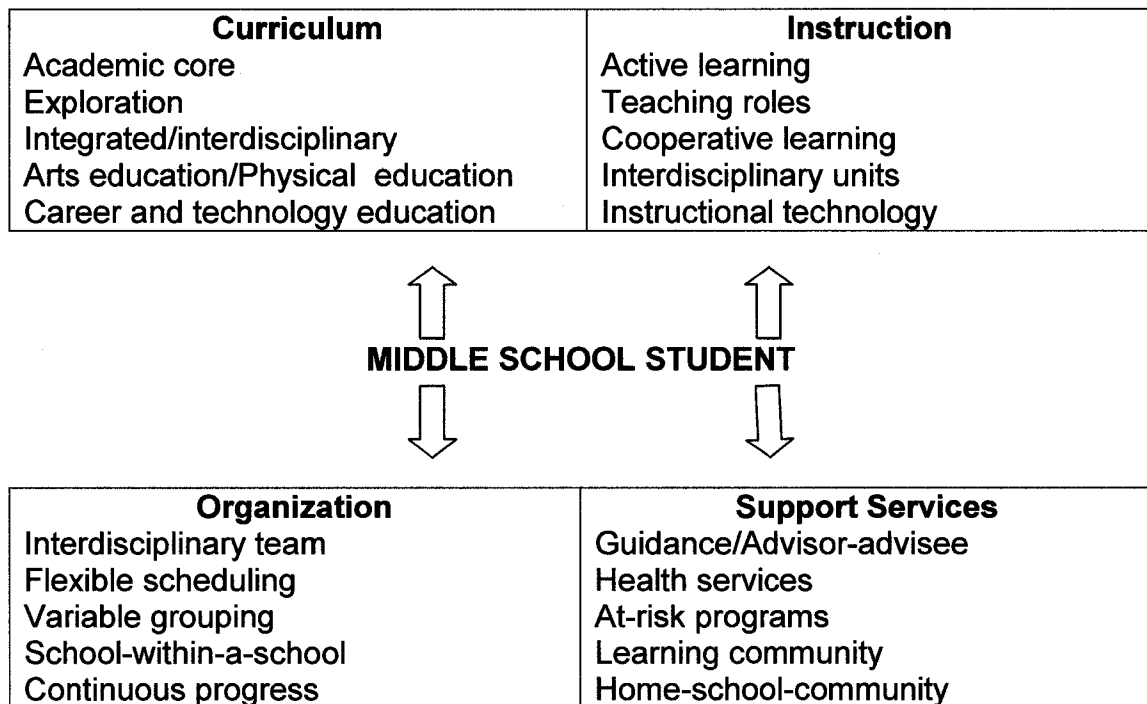


Figure 2. Exemplary Middle School Dimensions.

Adapted from Allen, Splittgerber & Manning, 1993, p. 6

Typically two to six teachers work together with a certain set of students. Each team of teachers within the building has the opportunity to meet and discuss curriculum ideas and instruction goals that are best suited to the students on their particular team. The students are then better served by teachers who are familiar with the strengths and weaknesses evidenced in this smaller group of students (Phillips, 2003; Rottier, 2000).

A community of learners is developed through team-building activities, advisory programs, and interdisciplinary units. When schools choose to adopt only parts of the middle school concept, problems will occur. While this study did not look at fidelity of implementation of the middle school philosophy, it is clear that teams are central to the framework and are an important aspect in developing a learning community.

Teacher Teaming: Development of a Professional Learning Community

This section will relate the major theory behind using the teaming structure and provide an overview of the theory of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), followed by a look at the process of teaming from both the business and education sectors.

Theory Behind Teaming

Making big schools feel small and personable is the reason teaming has been pushed to the forefront of the middle school concept (George & Lounsbury, 2000; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Mertens,

Flowers & Mulhall, 2001). Capelluti and Stokes (1991) provide a rationale for interdisciplinary teaming in middle grades as, “they provide a manageable, philosophically defensible approach to delivering instruction and guidance to this age group” (p. 8). In secondary school, including traditional junior high schools, there is typically a “lack of connection to the community, departmentalized teaching, ability grouping, normative grading and large student load that can undermine the motivation of both teachers and students” (Deemer, McCotter & Smith, 2003, p. 3).

Teaming attempts to bring the students into a community or family setting so that close relationships can be established between the students and faculty. Using this approach, faculty can be more responsive to student needs because of the more intimate relationships. Ideally, the teacher-to-student ratio in a teamed school is 1:20-25 (Brown, 2001; Kasak, 1998). Administrators have realized the power of teaming as evidenced by 79% of principals in middle level schools reporting interdisciplinary teams in 2000, up from 57% in 1992 (Valentine, Clark, Hackman & Petzko, 2002).

Teams range in number of faculty members. Two-member teams are typically found in fifth or sixth grade configurations to ease the transition from elementary school to the middle level. Likewise, teams of three to six or more are commonly used at the upper middle grades as an attempt to prepare students for high school (Jackson & Davis, 2000; NMSA, 2001; Trimble & Irvin, 1996; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). As Mertens and Flowers (2004) describe:

Team teachers plan, coordinate, and evaluate curriculum and instruction across academic areas. Teams cultivate meaningful and regular communication with families. Teams often share the same schedule and the same area of the building. For teachers, teams provide a collaborative and supportive work group.
(p. 1)

While the look of a team may be dissimilar from grade level to grade level or school to school, the concept is still the same.

Learning Communities

One of the goals of teaming is to create a community of learners among the staff and students of a school. Whether it is called a Professional Learning Community (PLC) or a community of learners, the objectives are similar. In order to develop an effective PLC for the staff, DuFour (2004) recommends focusing on these three attributes:

1. Culture of Collaboration – “The powerful collaboration that characterizes PLC uses a systemic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams...this process in turn leads to higher levels of student achievement” (p. 9).
2. Student learning – A shift from ensuring that students are not merely taught, but focusing on student learning has profound implications for practice and achievement results (p. 8).
3. Focus on Results – How effective a team is will be decided based upon the results of student achievement. Teacher teams seek hard evidence for increases in student achievement on projects and tests in order to determine what strategies were helpful in reaching students. Teams may “develop common formative assessments” to gain the evidence of how well their students are performing in comparison with other students (p. 10).

Collaboration of teachers is the mysterious process that needs to be understood in order to comprehend what takes place in the transformation from input to output in the systems theory of teaming. Researchers are attempting to understand and discover what constitutes a successful team/community in order to reach the goal of student achievement.

Sergiovanni (1994) defined community as a “collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together binded to a set of shared ideas and ideals” (p. xvi).

The key to making the community effective is the idea of having shared values and goals in order to build a sense of community among teachers (Balach & Syzmanski, 2003; Beck, 1999; DuFour, 2003; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Gable & Manning, 1997; Hackmann et al., 2002; Schaps. 2003; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004; Wald & Castleberry, 2000). Whether the term used is

- purpose (Kain, 1997),
- mission (Gallagher-Polite, 2001),
- goal (Capelluti & Stokes, 1991; Kasak, 1998; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Rottier, 2000), or
- value (Trimble & Irvin, 1996; West, 2004),

initial success essentially boils down to one simple truth. A grounded beginning will go a long way to creating a sense of security and trust for future success. Noddings (1996) notes that “in all strong communities, there is a significant measure of normocentricity. Strong communities stand for something; they share values as well as resources and customs” (p. 254).

Discovering what it is that the team will stand for is significant to the early teaming process.

When a community does not have shared values and goals, the school or team will show evidence of incoherent and inconsistent policies along with a lack of focus on academic improvement for the students, as shown in Weiss, Louis, and Hopkins' (1995) study of Dewey Middle School. The researchers found in their qualitative study that the organization, structure and current values of the school inhibited the development of a PLC due to the strong value of individual freedom. The staff believed that they would have to give up individual freedom in order to conform to the shared values that would be created by a PLC. By maintaining individual freedom, there was little accountability among the staff and the configuration of the building was not conducive to teaming. Teachers were able to maintain their "island" classrooms. None of the original teachers or the principal remained at the school by the end of the 5th year (pp. 160 – 184).

Creating teams that would inherently "predispose the development of the group into a strong learning community" is the difficult task at hand (Balach & Syzmanski, 2003, p. 27). Most researchers consistently say it simply takes time for teams to create an effective learning community (Brown, 2001; Dickinson & Erb, 1997; Jones, 1997; Kasak, 1998; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Rottier, 1996; Schamber, 1999). As Schamber (1999) eloquently notes, "Good teams do not simply happen any more than good marriages simply happen. Both require a deliberate effort in the quest for success" (p. 10).

Conflict occurs in all teaming relationships; the real test is in how teams handle the clash of ideas. The challenge is whether teams will grow from the disagreements or decide to become isolationists, clinging to precious viewpoints or subject matter (Achinstein, 2002; Nolan & Meister, 2000; Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

Process of Teaming

Team development follows a process. The most notable researchers in team or group work dynamics include Tuckman (1965) and George (1982) (see Table 2). Tuckman, from the business sector, claims that teams go through five stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning. These stages relate to George's ideas based on middle school teams which are organization, community, team teaching, and governance.

While teams process through these stages, other research has provided basic principles for organizing effective teams which include:

1. Keep teams small in terms of number of teachers and students.
 2. Provide sufficient individual and team planning time for teachers.
 3. Allow teams to design their students' daily schedule.
 4. Assign teams to their own area of the building.
 5. Allow teams to work together for multiple years.
- (Erb & Stevenson, 1999)

It is thought that by following these organizational techniques, teams may progress more quickly towards the goal of becoming a learning community. Upon reaching the status of learning community, there is a close association with being characterized as a highly effective team (Conley,

Table 2

Comparison of Tuckman and George Theories

Tuckman	George	Description
Forming	Organization	Team members are discovering their roles and are getting a feel for one another. Basic structures and goals are established.
Storming	Community & Governance	Team members have hit conflict and attempt to resolve issues. This is the early make-it-or-break-it stage to determine if the leader is trustworthy and dependable, and to discover the commitment of team members. Authority may be questioned.
Norming	Community	Positive results from conflict. Communication and cooperation have begun. Structures and procedures are established for the team.
Performing	Team Teaching	Professional collaboration is essential to a middle school team. Interdisciplinary instruction and the sharing of ideas helps build professionalism and relationships among the team members. Fruits of the labor are being seen.
Adjourning	Governance	Team members may leave or switch teams. By keeping relationships ongoing with outside faculty, accepting new members into the team is not as great a challenge. It also precludes the team from becoming an isolated island.

(Adapted from: George, 1982; Kain, 1997; Tuckman, 1965; West, 2004)

Fauske, & Pounder, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; Wald & Castleberry, 2000).

George and Alexander's (2003) research has also devised certain characteristics identified with highly effective teams. They include:

- Student-centered focus.
- Strong commitment to academic achievement.
- Collaborative policies and accountability systems.
- Strong sense of team community.
- Regular communication with parents.
- A proactive approach.
- Teachers who work professionally and collaboratively.

While these lists offer insight into how teams should be compiled, reality has a slightly different perspective. Since we know that "the behavior of individual team members significantly affects the performance of the team" (Rottier, 1996, p. 31), how teams are comprised is a critical factor in team functioning. Whenever possible, teachers currently on the team with a vacancy should be included in the hiring/interviewing process. The rationale for this process is simply that the teachers will be the individuals in direct contact with the new hire, though the final decision rests with the administration (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kain, 2001; Pollack & Mills, 1997; Rottier, 1996; White, 1997).

Collegiality of team members and the degree to which the members can successfully navigate their students to achievement may rest in the ideological base from which each member draws his or her foundational beliefs about education. Ideological background of each teacher has not yet

been the focus for administrators or teachers in creating teams, but is increasing in popularity with researchers and writers (Achinstein, 2002; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour, 2002; Wald & Castleberry, 2000).

Ideological Makeup of Teams

The characteristics of a strong sense of team community and teachers who are able to work professionally and collaboratively are the central themes behind recent research in the area of teaming. Through research and opinion, two opposing viewpoints have emerged.

Homogeneity

In one camp, Pugach & Johnson (1995), Trimble (1997), Achinstein (2002), Murata (2002), Crow & Pounder (2000), Rogers, Bowen & Hainline (1997), and Joseph et al. (2000) hold the belief that in teaming instances, it is vital for teachers to have a shared goal or vision which provides “an overarching aim enacted daily and embodied within a congruous set of practices” (Joseph et al., 2000, p. ix). The opposite would reflect a “mélange of unarticulated methods and purposes or a struggle to maintain a coherent vision amidst many competing pressures” (Joseph et al., 2000, p. ix). Achinstein (2002) found that disharmony between the teachers’ ideological view and the school mission/values affected teacher satisfaction and commitment.

Ideology defines the ways in which teachers think about education including learning goals and outcomes, curriculum and instruction, and school and home relationships. According to Ball (1987), looking at ideology as a political process involves how teachers and administrators as individuals and teams make sense of day-to-day work and decide how to proceed for the future. Conflict occurs when there is a disconnect among beliefs of team members and administrators.

Even if teachers appear to work well together, they may not share a common goal. In effect, “they have no sense of mutual commitment to a common purpose” (Pugach & Johnson, 1995, p 15). Trimble (1997) notes that “Effective teams are those where the personal characteristics and values of the teachers are aligned with the purposes of teams” (p. 299). This does not mean that dissent or diversity are not present within the teachers or the school; instead, having a shared ideology “served as a common framework that united the community” allowing that debate would expand the borders of learning and effect change for the better (Achinstein, 2002, p. 41). This type of conflict strengthened collaboration among the teachers and administration (Achinstein, 2002).

A study conducted by Pugach and Johnson (1995) found that “In some teams we have seen, teachers with diametrically opposed and irreconcilable philosophical differences have been placed together involuntarily and never have been able to find a comfortable way of working together” (p. 187). Rogers, Bowen, and Hainline (1997) relate their lived experiences as a team

and concur that “philosophical and attitudinal divisions greatly affected our ability to function wholly as a team” (p. 188). Joseph et al. (2000) would confirm that teacher teams consisting of individuals with similar ideologies create more collective and collaborative teams, increasing students’ ability to transfer from class to class with a set of expectations and goals.

Achinstein’s 2002 study of two urban middle schools exemplifies the concept of unity in ideology. Diversity of ideological beliefs among the teachers and the school at large led to many conflicts and teacher dissatisfaction. While the school’s mission included statements like helping the students to become “productive members of our richly diverse community,” one teacher notes that “it’s not about changing society. It’s about bringing these students’ scores up” (p. 430). Other members of the staff would state that the group of teachers is a “tightly knit community of friends” (p. 430). This type of disharmony in teachers’ beliefs was further reinforced by the trend of the staff to avoid conflict by removing the problem – whether it be a faculty member or student. This school, while diverse in beliefs, attempted to maintain a “public perception of unanimity” (p. 433), though teachers were at odds over student achievement, instructional strategies, and foundational values and goals. The school was never able to achieve harmony and satisfaction among the teachers, which inevitably led to greater discipline problems and lower student achievement.

Not having a shared vision promotes the view of each teacher in his/her own classroom as an island, not talking to peers, and able to escape external

scrutiny (Weiss, Louis & Hopkins, 1995). Teachers must move beyond this isolation and band together in collaborative relationships. Teaming encourages intellectually stimulating conversations among professionals who can learn from each other and continually develop or improve their own personal classroom skills. Creating this type of professional learning community takes effort and desire (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Wald & Castleberry, 2000).

As Crow and Pounder (2000) discerned in their qualitative study of 34 middle school teachers, having homogeneous views as the basis for team composition was effective in the teachers' progress of developing a learning community. The teams studied included core teachers who had similar philosophies of teaching and similar interests in teaching methods. The differences for one teaching team included "pace of change, creativity, and interest in big vs. small projects" (Crow & Pounder, p. 236). Holding group norms that influenced both teacher and student performance were essential to effective functioning as a team for all groups studied.

Murata's (2002) qualitative research revealed similar findings. These norms allowed for ease of communication and decision making regarding curriculum, organization, and interpersonal processes (Murata, 2002; Crow & Pounder, 2000). Murata went so far as to conclude that the "characteristics of successful teaming revealed that perhaps the most important quality of a sound working relationship was the sharing of essential beliefs about teachers' roles and attitudes, especially with regard to curriculum and instruction" (p.

73). Furthermore, teachers in both studies were satisfied with their career choice and wanted to continue teaming.

Heterogeneity

Westheimer (1999) has seen a different side of a team with diverse ideologies. In his study, diverse teachers adapted a very liberal view of teaming and agreed to a common goal, using multiple approaches of achieving this end. Others would agree that it is possible, and even preferable, to include diverse perspectives on the middle school team to accommodate the needs of diverse learners (Bullock & Pederson, 1999; Conley, Fauske, & Pounder, 2004; Kasak, 1998; Nolan & Meister, 2000; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; West, 2004; White, 1997).

West (2004) asserts that "Teams should also have a sufficient level of diversity in members' functional backgrounds, life experience, cultures, and work experience to ensure a variety of perspectives is taken in their work and decision making" (p. 46). Within the classroom, diversity in talents and skills translates to creativity and greater number of ideas.

Nolan and Meister (2000) relate the experiences of a secondary school team as the school approached the decision to change the structure to a teamed building. In following the five teachers involved in this evolution to teaming, the researchers discovered vital truths to school change and the process of teaming in a small private school. The study was conducted with five teachers embarking on a new vision for their endowed school involving

teaming relationships for teachers and students. The new team of teachers was a mix of gender, age, ethnicity, content-specific background, and teaching experience. Through this qualitative study, the teachers expressed their individual ideological beliefs throughout the interview process. It was evident that these teachers were diverse in their foundational beliefs about education.

The group did not believe they would become a unified team. Subject loyalty was one of the issues identified as a problem area. The team decided to create a team mission. In doing so, and “In spite of all the tension, the teachers had a professional commitment to each other. They were as committed to the team’s mission as to their subject-area content” (Nolan & Meister, 2000, p. 158). With the mission in place, the team also spent time searching for an identity, including a team name that all would agree represented the goals for the team. Nolan and Meister conclude that, “In spite of all the obstacles that the teachers encountered, they continued to persevere with the restructuring endeavor” (p. 169). “Because they were emotionally interconnected by their commitment to their students, the teachers were able to collaborate effectively on those issues they understood and valued” (p. 208). Even though these teachers were diversified in their philosophical backgrounds, they found ways to collaborate and work for the improved achievement of their students.

Commitment was a key factor in Conley, Fauske, and Pounder’s (2004) study of teacher work group effectiveness. The researchers identified “Lack of team commitment [as] the interpersonal process issue most consistently

identified” as a concern to team members (p. 673). In this descriptive and correlational study that used survey data, the researchers observed that “having a heterogeneous mix of expertise on teams and of balancing inputs of team members...enhanced team cohesion and commitment” (p. 693). This represents a change of camp for Pounder from the 2000 study in which Crow and Pounder proposed group norms as key to interpersonal processes. By focusing on the commitment of individual team members and the support provided in a teaming relationship, diverse philosophy orientation was not an issue.

Similarly, Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine’s (1999) case study of nine middle schools found that, while the team members held diverse perspectives due to varied backgrounds and teaching experiences, these attributes allowed the teams to “function in ways they never expected” (p. 141). Some of the teams focused on “understanding each other and developed a common set of team values” (p. 142). By creating team values, all teachers on the team had a common ground from which to base discussions and ideas. This mirrors West’s (2004) and White’s (1997) ideas that “diversity will translate into effectiveness and sparking innovation” due to the members’ backgrounds, cultures and work experiences (West, p. 46). White takes it one step further to state that this variety of philosophies, while possibly leading to early team difficulties, “will lead to a higher level of team maturity” (p. 91). The teams in White’s study collectively agreed that it was

the diversity of backgrounds, ideas and philosophies that made them test and analyze their own teaching and added strength to the team.

Professional Preparation of Middle School Educators

This section describes current practices within states and universities to prepare preservice teachers for middle level education.

Some researchers claim that middle school teachers have not been given sufficient instruction regarding the middle school philosophy or the students they will be teaching (FERENCE & McDowell, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; McEwin, Dickinson & Hamilton, 2000). Teacher education programs in 44 states offer middle level certificates or endorsements; however, only 21 states actually require any coursework specific towards early adolescents (Gaskill, 2002).

Illinois requires middle level teachers to obtain an endorsement, accomplished through minimal coursework on early adolescent psychology and middle school organization. Preservice teachers typically complete these requirements in two or three courses. The middle grades endorsement may be attached to either the elementary education certificate, grades K-9, or to the secondary certificate, grades 6-12, in the State of Illinois. Although the certificates appear to include the middle grade range, teachers cannot accept a position in the middle school unless they have completed the endorsement coursework. Recently, the ISBE conducted studies and developed standards

for a full middle grades certification program; however, the decision was made to continue the endorsement option (ISBE, 2003a).

The need for preparation programs specifically designed for middle level educators is critical to the success of the middle school movement (FERENCE & McDOWELL, 2005; GASKILL, 2002; McEWIN, DICKINSON, & HAMILTON, 2000). As Dickinson and Butler (2001) suggest, "The result of the lack of middle school teacher preparation and middle school licensure is that professionals, even those who find that they enjoy teaching this age group, often find themselves woefully ignorant of middle school theory and philosophy" (p. 9). In light of NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers in every classroom, it is reasonable to suggest that more states will need to move towards a middle grades certification. Certification provides the necessary grounding for a knowledge base of content, affective, developmental, and organizational features specific to middle schools and early adolescents. In particular, certification would present topics in depth concerning:

- interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum
- methodology associated with hands-on and cooperative learning
- cognitive, social and physical development of the early adolescent
- mentoring
- teaming and other collaborative relationships
- assessment
- philosophy of the middle school movement
- advisory

(FERENCE & McDOWELL, 2005; ISBE, 2003a; NCATE, 2001; NMSA, 2006; McEWIN, DICKINSON, & HAMILTON, 2000).

In 1997, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) began extensive research into middle grades education in hopes of improving middle level schools (Cooney & Bottoms, 1997). The study identified six main strategies, including “providing highly qualified teachers in the middle grades” (p. 25). Within the 14 states involved in this study, the difference between teachers who knew academic content and strategies for teaching early adolescents versus those who did not, factored significantly into the achievement of students in those states. This difference manifested itself in student assignments, state test scores, and teacher professional development.

The SREB now holds the recommendation that all teachers for middle grades should be content-area trained, as well as instructed in middle level educational philosophy and strategies, instead of being trained as an elementary school teacher (Cooney & Bottoms, 1997).

Teaming and Student Achievement

This section describes the role of teaming and PLCs and the effect of such structures on student achievement.

Student achievement is the driving force behind most reform efforts. Teaming may be the answer some districts are looking for, as Cooney and Bottoms (1997) research has identified that

Struggling schools often isolate teachers in the classroom and limit opportunities for them to learn from each other. They fail to make time for teachers to meet together at least weekly. Teachers in some schools have time to meet everyday, but do not use the

time to plan instruction, assess progress and implement effective teaching practices.
(p.18)

Many experts maintain that developing a professional learning community or team will lead to greater commitment by the staff for collective responsibility, as well as social and academic growth in students (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Supovitz, 2002; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004). Sicoli (2000) notes that "A caring staff, positive incentives, and a willingness on the part of staff to address the student as a whole person are three school environmental factors that lead to increased student performance and improved student perceptions of school" (p. 10).

Research by Phillips (2003) supports Sicoli's assertion as she studied a diverse middle school. The school achievement scores soared after a three-year span in which teaming was introduced to the school. The principal at the school attributes this growth as a direct result "of the teacher personal learning, the heightened awareness, and work done in our departmental study groups. It is beyond organizational stuff..." (p. 56).

When teachers collaborate and learn new ideas and methods from one another, it is to the students' advantage. Pollak and Mills (1997) relate an example from their research when a middle school language arts teacher and reading teacher combined forces to create a new workshop. "Supportive, informal interactions among willing participants yielded an innovative, effective

teaching method that benefited both teachers and students” (p. 30). While this study revealed results from a short-term teamed approach, other more long-range studies have similar results.

Dickinson and Erb (1997) note that as more elements of teaming and the middle school philosophy at large are implemented in a school, student achievement rises along a continuum and also incorporates student behavior and overall positive attitudes (p. 528). Felner et al. (1997) agree, as the study they conducted evidenced that level of philosophy implementation factored significantly in achievement level. Students in the most highly implemented schools/teams scored highest in achievement tests. Mertens and Flowers (2003) agree that schools which employ greater levels of team planning time encourage greater improvement and innovation in classrooms. Poverty level has not been shown to be a negative factor against common planning time. Schools with high poverty levels have raised their achievement scores by increasing the amount of common planning time given to teams.

Achievement has been a main focus for high poverty schools in particular. Studies conducted by Trimble and Peterson (1999, 2000) demonstrate the effectiveness of teaming on raising scores and achievement status of high poverty schools. By using a mixed methodology including questionnaires, interviews, school report card data and school documents, the researchers found that 62% of the faculty believed strongly that being on a team improved their classrooms. Specifically in achievement, students made gains in all subject areas and sustained this improvement for the three years

of the study. Team planning impacted class performance, and enhanced the teacher's job satisfaction. The schools had higher levels of teaming implementation and "provided a richer environment for learning, with more attention to individual needs" (2000, p. 6). High team functioning influenced classroom practices and led to greater student outcomes.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 has provided an overview of the current research literature as it pertains to the importance of teaming on the success of middle school students. The literature revealed that teaming and the construction of a professional learning community is central to the functioning of the middle school philosophy and the effectiveness of the teachers, emphasizing collaboration and student achievement.

This study could support and influence these previous findings to encourage middle schools to adopt a teaming structure and implement teaming along philosophical lines.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Overview

This study was undertaken to observe whether congruence of ideology within a middle school team was linked to student achievement. In order to discover this potential relationship, a questionnaire and q-sort were developed to ascertain individual teacher biographical and professional information, along with individual teacher's ideological stance on education.

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of curriculum ideology congruency within teams and schools and the relationship between congruency of ideology among team members and school achievement. The issue has been raised as to whether a team should be constructed with diversity of teachers in mind (Bullock & Pederson, 1999; Conley, Fauske, & Pounder, 2004; Kasak, 1998; Nolan & Meister, 2000; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; West, 2004; Westheimer, 1999; White, 1997) or with a homogenous group of teachers (Achinstein, 2002; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Joseph et al., 2000; Murata 2002; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Rogers, Bowen & Hainline, 1997; Trimble, 1997). Diversity is seen as differences in professional background, ideology, and certification, with an emphasis on

ideology for this study. Homogeneity would therefore follow a similar pattern of congruence for professional background, ideology and certification, with an emphasis on ideology for this study.

This study applied a literature-based framework of curriculum ideologies to the construction of teams in order to determine whether or not either position had any merit for future use. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What curriculum ideologies are expressed by middle school staff members?
2. Is there a relationship in expressed ideologies among staff members based upon:
 - a. Initial teacher certification
 - b. Teaching experience
 - c. Teaming experience
 - d. Age
3. What is the nature of ideological congruency within teams and schools?
4. Is there a relationship between school achievement status and the congruency of expressed curriculum ideology among teacher teams?

To address these research questions concerning teacher team construction and curriculum ideology, a causal-comparative research design was selected. This method was chosen over other quantitative method options, as it provided the opportunity to discover what relationships existed among the variables with the possibility of prediction. Chi square, a nonparametric test, was appropriate due to the nominal nature of the data. This study hypothesized that the variables of ideological congruence and student achievement were related, so that one variable could potentially

predict the other (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Determining if a relationship exists between the variables of ideological congruence and student achievement leads to the goal of this research: to provide information useful in assigning teacher teams in middle level schools. Creating teams that work and lead to student achievement rests at the core of the middle school concept.

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in this study. The sections included are the participants, instrumentation, data collection, analysis of the data, and a summary of the chapter.

The Participants

Study participants were identified based upon their employment at middle schools within a major urban school district. A focus on an urban district was considered desirable since the need to increase student achievement in urban schools has been identified as particularly acute both regionally and nationally (Bauer, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2003; ISBE, 2001a; Johnson, 1997; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Mertens & Flowers, 2003; Navarro, 2004; Revilla & De La Garza-Sweeney, 1997; Spilman, 1995; Trimble, 2002; Walsh, 2000; Watters, 2003; Wirt et al., 2003; Young, 2002) . The selected district was chosen based upon a combination of factors. Initially, the district was chosen for its relative large size, providing ample prospective study participants. In the 2000-2001 school year, the district was identified by the National Center for Education Statistics (Young, 2002, p. 68) in the top 225

school districts nationwide based upon population, which topped 27,000 pupils. Secondly, the district is in an urban city which has a great diversity in population. Thirdly, the district was geographically close to the researcher and has various agreements with the researcher's university.

Individual schools were selected for participation in this study based upon the grade level configuration within the district and the presence of an interdisciplinary teaming structure; hence schools that contained grades K-8 were not included in this study. Six schools met the criteria and five chose to participate in the study. Both the district and participating middle schools are referred to by pseudonyms in this study.

All willing middle level practitioners from the five participating schools were approached for this study in an effort to view as many different perspectives as possible in order to eliminate or reduce the bias of participants (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002; Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). All teachers engaged in the interdisciplinary teaming structure, as well as encore teachers and specialists, were invited to participate in the study by completing the study packet which included the invitation letter (Appendix A), the consent letter (Appendix B), the questionnaire (Appendix C), and the q-sort (Appendix D).

For the second research question, the study utilized the formula

$$N = (1/\Delta)^2(z\alpha + z\beta)^2 \quad (3.1)$$

to determine a meaningful size in order to reach a 90% probability on a one-tailed .05 alpha level of significance. Approximately 78 participants were

needed for “the desired power to reject the null hypothesis for specified effect size and level of significance” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 182-183) when calculated for question 2 of this study:

$$N = (1/.33)^2(1.64 + 1.28)^2 = 9(8.56) = 77.04 \quad (3.2)$$

Potentially, 162 teamed teachers within the five schools were viable candidates to participate in this study. From the five schools that elected to participate, 138 teamed teachers agreed to complete the paperwork.

Instrumentation

This section describes the different instruments used to gather data for this study, including a questionnaire and a q-sort. Also discussed is a pilot study completed prior to this research study, as well as reliability and validity concerns.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed to gather data pertinent to question 2 of this research study, and to provide the teaming information necessary to sort the individual teachers into their teams after all questionnaires had been collected. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part I: Demographics – provided background knowledge of the teacher’s age, certification currently held and certification program completed. This information was used to identify possible variables among teachers on

teams and to identify the demographic make-up of teachers at each school.

Age and certification program completed were also used to search for relationships between those variables and individual ideology. These data were then used to examine potential influences age and initial certification may hold in relationship to ideological stance of the individual teacher.

Part II: Current Teaching Assignment – provided information on current teaching assignment, number of years teaching, subject(s) currently taught, and teaming experience. Using this background information in conjunction with ideology was central to this study, specifically the teaming experience. The ideological makeup of that team and the student achievement level of the school was analyzed to discern if the hypothesis of the study had any merit for future use.

The design was such that participants quickly and easily completed the one-sided, single sheet questionnaire and could more readily focus on the q-sort, which was the foundation of this study.

Q-Sort

The q-sort (Appendix D) for teacher curriculum ideologies was adapted from Bernard Badiali's (Poetter & Badiali, 2001) original version (Appendix E) created for teaching purposes in 1992. The terms and questions of the q-sort are based on multiple sources to create an accurate representation of Eisner's (2002) stated ideologies. The scoring guide is provided in Appendix F.

The four questions addressed through the q-sort established the individual teacher's ideological preference centered on the areas of the role of the teacher, the role of curriculum, the goal of education, and the content of the curriculum. The convergence of these four areas provided an overview of the individual's views on the four main constructs of education and revealed the ideological foundation with which the individual most closely aligned.

The q-sort is a forced-choice representation of the teacher's ideology in which the teachers are instructed to rank statements from 5 to 1, with 5 being the statement with which they most agree down to the statement with which they least agree as a 1. In doing so, the teacher's individual ideology is represented by the highest ranking ideology after transferring the results into the decoding table.

From the result of the pilot study, changes were made in phrasing as suggested by various pilot participants. Changes were made to the opening statements of each question category. For instance, instead of the first question simply stating the word "Aims," the question when used in the study read, "I believe the goal of our education system should be." This pattern was adopted for all four questions. The pilot group also recommended stressing that each category needed to include numbers 1-5 only one time, so that individuals must choose between two equally good-sounding answers. As a result, the q-sort directions and questions were modified to reflect the suggested changes for final use. The piloted q-sort may be found in Appendix C, as it used the original version from Poetter and Badiali (2001).

Reliability and Validity

This section will review the factors affecting reliability and validity with respect to the ISAT and the q-sort.

ISAT. According to the ISBE Assessment Division (2003b), the ISAT tests used for ranking the schools as either Achieving or Underachieving demonstrate a high reliability as internal consistency values (coefficient alpha) for each of the middle school tests in 2003 ranged from .90 to .96. “The results for the interrater agreement on double-scored papers exceeded the minimum acceptable level of agreement (90% agreement within one point). Scores across raters agree within one point at least 96% of the time” (p. 15).

Q-Sort. As noted earlier, the q-sort was created from multiple authors’ perspectives on ideologies, reflecting back to the major concepts presented in Eisner’s (2002) text. Using Doll (1996), McNeil (1996), and Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), the various philosophical schools of thought were refined to produce the current assessment tool used in this study. The convergence of these different authors’ descriptions of curriculum ideologies is the basis for face validity of the q-sort.

The q-sort was piloted with both practicing and preservice teachers. This group displayed diversity in age, initial certification or program in progress, teaching experience, and teaming experience. All participants were either undergraduate students completing elementary or secondary

certification or were graduate students currently employed in middle or high school classrooms. The pilot group was given the q-sort with the time constraint of 20 minutes maximum. Each participant scored the q-sort using the provided guide and was allowed to view his or her selected ideology to determine whether or not they agreed with his/her own individual results. Of the 68 individuals that participated, 100% agreed with the result, indicating content validity for the tested items.

Six factors affect reliability of a test, as described by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen (2006). These factors include “length of the test, heterogeneity of the group, ability level of the group, techniques used to estimate reliability, nature of the variable and objectivity of the scoring” (p. 267).

The q-sort was four questions in length and asked staff members to identify belief statements for the four dimensions of ideology based upon initial reaction to each statement. This measure was selected due to the short time span allotted for the staff to complete the necessary paperwork to participate in the study. Administrators, on average, provided 15 minutes for this study, with a drop box available for anyone who needed extra time. The limited length of the test may have reduced the reliability of the assessment tool.

The staff members represented a great diversity in age, ethnicity, experience and certification. Given these variables and the heterogeneous makeup of the group, there may be a higher degree of reliability for this study based on this factor.

The q-sort used in this study realized an 86% return from the first and second attempts to contact the teachers, which is an acceptable rate of return response, exceeding the 78 participants needed for an acceptable power rating used for research question two (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). Overall, 78% of the teachers responded positively, 8% declined participation, and 14% never responded to the participation request. Individual schools ranged from 70% - 93% in overall participation.

When focusing on the ability level of the participants, two factors must be considered. All participants were college graduates; some had received master's or other post-graduate degrees. The questions were written using terminology that would have been discussed in undergraduate coursework. Some participants did struggle with some of the wording of the questions, as indicated by underlining and question marks used for various statements on individual q-sorts. One teacher decided not to participate after beginning the q-sort and noted that she could not complete the test in the time given, as she desired a longer time to think about her responses, and did not have the time after the meeting to devote to the test. The test was opinion without "one" correct answer. Most of the participants responded without difficulty to the questions and used most of the time allotted. Given these instances, the assessment tool appeared to be appropriate for the ability level of the group, which may suggest a higher degree of reliability.

This study measured teachers' ideologies by q-sort responses only one time and did not provide for a re-test scenario. The nature of the variable is

possibly inconsistent since teachers' values and beliefs are may not be constant, as a person's life experiences may transform overall curriculum ideology over time. A re-test could demonstrate a lower reliability under these circumstances, since the answers that the teachers may choose could change if asked to complete the q-sort the following year. The scoring of the q-sort is objective, as there is a set pattern to the answers, suggesting a possible higher degree of reliability.

Data Collection

This section presents information of the different sources of data used in this study, as well as procedures followed for the collection of that data.

Sources of Data

Data were collected via a questionnaire and a q-sort. Variables included the five identified curriculum ideologies, years of teaching and teaming, age of staff members, type of teacher preparation, and school achievement level. The questionnaire solicited demographic and professional experience information.

Data representing student achievement and school characteristics were taken from state-sponsored school report cards and achievement lists, district-sponsored school websites, and the local newspaper. Individual school report card data included percentages of minority students and teachers, percentages of economically disadvantaged students, chronic truancy and

mobility rates, and average class size. Other data taken from the state report cards included success by each school on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT). The scores associated with the ISAT were used to categorize the schools as Achieving or Underachieving.

School websites were used to ascertain teaming configurations, number of teachers within each building, and school goals. This information was used to determine the number of teachers available for the study and to identify which teachers did not return the study packet, in order to send out second requests.

A special back-to-school supplement was published by the local newspaper which described each school, including the mission statement and goals of each different middle school. This information was used as background knowledge concerning the schools. This supplement also provided an editorial on the state of the school district and the concerns of the general public.

Data Collection Procedures

Principals were contacted from each middle school and permission was obtained to solicit teacher participation. The study packet, including invitation letter (Appendix A), consent letter (Appendix B), questionnaire (Appendix C), and q-sort (Appendix D), was distributed to teachers at faculty meetings during the fall and/or winter of the 2004-2005 school year. Monthly morning faculty meetings are mandatory in all five of the middle schools involved in this study.

Faculty members were given a brief introduction to the project and asked to complete the paperwork within the 15-20 minutes provided during the meeting. Upon request, teachers were allowed to complete the paperwork at a later time and return the packet to a collection box in their school's main office. If a teacher was not in attendance at the faculty meeting, the packet was put in the individual's mailbox. A return envelope was included for confidentiality, as the packet was returned to a high traffic, public location.

Administrators were given the opportunity to complete the survey if they so desired. Again, the time limit was short, as this q-sort sought the first response from the participants, as it is usually the most accurate for the given moment. The administrators at each building allowed up to 30 minutes for the presentation, but allowed the teachers to continue working on the forms while the meeting progressed after the 30 minutes.

Teachers completed the q-sort only once and were not informed of the results. The researcher collected the packets in two stages so that confidentiality was maintained. The participants were asked to remove the consent and study letters from the front of the packet. Participants kept the study letter and a copy of the consent form while turning in the signed consent form for both affirmative and negative participation. When the individual participant completed the questionnaire and q-sort portions of the packet, the researcher gathered the packets.

Initial packets for teachers not in attendance at the faculty meetings were placed in the teachers' mailboxes. Follow-up packets for four of the

schools were distributed in January of 2005 since the initial packets had been completed in November 2004 at these schools. Follow-up packets were dispersed to the final school in March, as the initial packets had been completed in February. Final tabulations were begun in April of 2005.

Analysis of the Data

Data collected from the questionnaire and q-sort were tallied, tabulated and reported in frequency distributions, percentages, and tables. Chi-square tests were conducted to describe relationships between selected variables, with a significance level set at $p < .05$.

Chi-square analysis constitutes the essence of the investigation in answering the key research questions posed earlier. The results of these analyses will be presented in Chapter 4.

A variety of graphs, percentages and tables representing the different ideologies used by years teaching, teaming, age, or by teacher certification training were developed. These distributions constitute a secondary focus of the study and supported the main focus of teaming ideology in eliminating other variables that may have contributed to student achievement.

Coding

Analysis included coding the information for initial certification, years teaching, age, and teaming. The q-sort was then tabulated to ascertain the primary ideology of each teacher. Ideologies were abbreviated for ease of

discussion in graphic form. The abbreviations, as noted in Chapter 1, are as follows: Orthodoxy (Ortho); Rational Humanism (RH); Progressivism (Prog); Reconstructionism (Recon); Critical Theory (CT).

Certification type was also abbreviated for convenience in the data analysis. Elementary Education is identified as Eled; Secondary as Sec. Both Special Education (Sped) staff members and teachers with K-12 (K-12) certification used the distinction of Other unless individual teachers are discussed.

Teams were coded within the schools to ensure confidentiality. The name used to identify teams follows a pattern indicating the school name using the first initial of the pseudonym and assigned number within the school. The exception to this coding is Tregay Middle School, which bears the distinction of TR for team name since Turner Middle School was given the T moniker. Teams were initially placed into the database using the grade level and team letter assigned by the middle school for ease in inputting the data.

Staff members were coded for their primary ideology as they were entered into the database. The highest scoring ideology, based upon the sum of individual question rankings, was declared the individual teacher's primary ideology. In the event of a tie or multiple ideologies receiving the same number of points, referred to as an eclectic teacher, a specific system was used to determine the strongest of the ideologies.

For this system, teachers with eclectic results were analyzed for the ideology which received the most 5s on the q-sort. In the event of a tie in 5s,

the score of 4 was analyzed next to help determine the strongest ideology for the individual and so on. For example, teacher T3B at Turner Middle School recorded rankings for the four questions as noted in Table 3.

Table 3
Teacher T3B Q-Sort Rankings

Question	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
1	3	5	4	2	1
2	1	5	4	2	3
3	1	2	3	4	5
4	1	4	5	2	3
Totals	6	16	16	10	12

This teacher scored 16 points for both Rational Humanism and Progressivism. Using the described ranking system, this individual was placed in the Rational Humanism ideological stance since Rational Humanism contained two 5-point rankings versus Progressivism, which only rated one 5-point rank, as noted in Table 4.

Table 4
Teacher T3B Identified Ideology

Question	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
1	3	5	4	2	1
2	1	5	4	2	3
3	1	2	3	4	5
4	1	4	5	2	3
Totals	6	16	16	10	12

Teams were then assigned their official codes based upon their school pseudonym and diversity level, indicated by number. All congruent teams from a school were randomly assigned numbers, beginning with 1. Next, all weak congruent teams were assigned numbers, directly following the last congruent number. Diverse teams were assigned subsequently in the same fashion, followed by strongly diverse teams, which have the largest numeric value designations.

Teacher teams were divided into four categories based on the level of congruency displayed in individual ideologies. To be declared Congruent (C), all teachers from a team who completed a q-sort had identical primary ideologies. Whether the primary ranking equaled a one-point difference from the secondary ideology or that teacher was identified as eclectic, the strength of the primary ranking was not a concern for this study. The category Weak Congruency (WC) was determined by a 75% - 99% agreement in ideologies or rankings of 5 and/or 4 on the four questions from the q-sort by every member of the team that completed a q-sort. For example, at Falk Middle School, Team F3, a five-person team, maintained one member in the Rational Humanism ideology while four claimed Progressivism as their primary ideology. Team F3 is declared WC due to 80% agreement among the five members toward the Progressivism ideology.

Diverse (D) teams held between 74% - 50% congruency in either ideology or 5s and/or 4s on the q-sort. Strongly Diverse (SD) teams were marked for having more than 50% of the members identifying different

ideologies as their main philosophical stance. In practice, some members may have congruence within a diverse or strongly diverse team, but the congruence is not held by enough members to state that the team has a given set of norms. For example, at Tregay Middle School, Team TR6, two teachers share Rational Humanism ideologies, and two teachers share Critical Theory ideologies, while one teacher is a Progressivist. There is some agreement between members of this team, but overall they are a blend that does not present a united front to any ideology.

School calculations were based on individual teachers rather than teams in order to calculate the degree of congruency within the building. Staff members not involved with a teaming structure were asked to complete the questionnaire and q-sort in order to provide a broad spectrum of the school ideology. Administrators who were willing to participate were also invited to complete a packet. This study did not delve into the idea of administrative versus teacher ideology. The administrator(s) were simply included in the total school ideology calculation.

Chapter Summary

This study was undertaken to determine if there were any measurable and statistically significant relationships associated with ideology and achievement. To obtain needed information from this study, data were gathered from public documents, including Illinois State School Report Cards, and study participants, including questionnaire and q-sort data. Data were

analyzed and reported in frequency distributions, percentages, and chi-square results. Findings are reported in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there is a relationship between overall school achievement in teamed middle schools and team characteristics, particularly congruency/diversity of ideology among team members. The independent variables included literature-based ideologies, teacher preparation as defined by initial certification program, years of team membership, and teacher age. The dependent variable was the academic achievement status of the schools as indicated by the designation of either achieving or underachieving based on percent of students meeting state standards on the ISAT.

Organization of the Findings

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the demographics for the district, students, and teachers using information gathered from the state report cards and the study questionnaire. Sections two, three, four, and five relate the findings of the study corresponding to each of the four questions posed. Section two presents results describing the curriculum ideologies expressed by middle school teachers. Section three uses chi-square analysis to consider relationships that

may exist between expressed ideologies and other variables in this study.

Section four describes the nature of ideological congruence within teams and schools. Finally, section five examines any relationships that may exist between congruency of team ideologies and school achievement status through chi-square analysis.

The frequency distributions, tables, and percentages reported in this study from both the teacher questionnaire and q-sort are based on total valid cases only. While missing team members or incomplete cases are noted on the tables, neither these cases nor their percentages were included in the reported statistics. All percentages were rounded to the nearest tenth. Chi-square tests were conducted using a .05 alpha level for significance.

Overview of the Demographics

Following a descriptive overview of the district, including all K-12 schools, this section describes the students and teachers within the district at participating middle schools.

District

Stephenson (pseudonym) Public School District is a large, urban district comprised of 38 elementary schools including magnet, bilingual, and year-round schooling options; six middle schools, including one magnet; and four high schools. The district houses over 27,000 students within these schools, ranking it in the top 225 nationally by number of students (Young, 2002). The

district prides itself on being “A Community of Learners” as identified in the mission statement.

The mission of the [Stephenson] Public Schools is to serve the community by ensuring all of its diverse students develop the capabilities to: learn throughout their lives, succeed in the global economy, and contribute to society, by creating dynamic integrated learning environments that respond to the needs and aspirations of the individual student in partnership with family and community.
(RRStar, 2003, p.1)

The city is divided by a river, with most new growth on the east side and more recent expansion in the northwest, in the countryside. Typically, the east side is considered to be in the middle to upper socioeconomic classifications, while the west side is generally viewed as reflecting lower socioeconomic status. The small town of Fairfield (pseudonym), located to the southeast of the city, also is serviced by the school district. Fairfield maintains an elementary school within its city limits; however, all students are bused to Stephenson for middle and high school.

As reported by the district, approximately 88.5% of the teachers are White, while only 5.6% are identified as Black. In addition, 4.4% of teachers identify themselves as Hispanic, 1.3% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% as Native American. On average, the teachers have 17 years of experience and over 66% have master's degrees or above. This is well above the state average of 13.9 years of experience and 46% of teachers with a master's degree or higher (ISBE, 2005).

The district resembles the state in classes not taught by highly qualified teachers. The state averages 2% while the district averages 2.1%. Teachers are compensated above the state average: \$62,144 for the district; \$55,558 for the state. Administrators, on the other hand, make considerably less than the state average: \$85,298 for the district; \$97,051 for the state (ISBE, 2005).

Participating Schools

Data that follow are representative for the five middle schools that chose to participate in this study. Scott Middle School, the sixth school, is included only in the map for the location of the schools, but is not included in any data analysis (see Appendix G).

More than a decade ago, the district was placed under court supervision as a result of a desegregation case and students were placed into schools based not on home proximity, but rather on the basis of parental choice. School choice remains available within the district; however, there is a push to return to the concept of neighborhood schools. Parents have voiced strong opinions that they would like their children to be in schools closer to home, to build neighborhood connections (Watters, 2003). Given the district's segregation issues in the past, a significant segment of the community is not too eager to return to neighborhood schools immediately, as there are concerns that segregation might occur once again. With this situation in mind, the district currently gives first priority to the relative

proximity of student and school when placement is made. As displayed in Table 5, participating middle schools have between 44% and 63% minority population in the current structure.

Table 5

Participating Middle School Demographic Data 2004

Data	Turner	Davis	Tregay	Springfield	Falk
# of Students	919	913	919	991	1242
# Teamed Teachers	28	24	26	36	48
% Low SES					
2002	44.6	50.7	48.1	52.8	63.9
2003	36.7	42.7	54.9	52.6	56.5
2004	40.3	57.6	37.4	66.7	57.9
3 year Ave	40.5	50.3	46.8	57.4	59.4
Category	LP	HP	LP	HP	HP
Mobility Rate	13.5	20.1	19.6	24.6	16.2
Chronic Truancy	2.9	4.4	6.9	12.2	12.3
Average Class Size	25.4	22.6	24.4	21.2	22.0
% Minority Students	45.2	56.6	44.2	53.0	62.4

LP=low poverty (under 50% low SES)

HP=high poverty (over 50% low SES)

(ISBE, 2005)

A majority of students at the participating middle schools are from low-income households, averaging approximately 50% of the population (Table 5). Two schools within the district meet the requirements for low poverty rank, meaning that less than 50% of the school population is considered in the low socioeconomic status group. These two schools represent both Achieving and Underachieving school designations. The district has a higher than state average chronic truancy rate (6.2% for the district as opposed to 1.9% for the state). An important difference among the schools is in the mobility rate, which ranges from 13.5% to 24.6% across the five schools. Mobility rate is important, as both educators and students face struggles when students change schools during the academic year (Curran, Guin & Marshall, 2002; Demie, Lewis & Taplin, 2005; Offenburg, 2004).

The district has placed Falk Middle School, its lone magnet middle school, on the west side in a new building. Falk is the largest middle school, as shown in Table 5, with over 1200 students as compared with 900 to 1,000 at the other participating middle schools. The focus of Falk is to explore science and environmental issues throughout its classes.

Davis Middle School is located on the west side of the river in one of the oldest buildings in the district. Davis "is dedicated to helping students do quality work while acting responsibly, planning effectively, and achieving at their highest level" (RPS 205, 2006). Davis houses the Gifted and Talented program for the district at the middle school level. This school also has

traditional students in all grades. ISAT scores for this school are not separated between the two distinct groups of students.

Scott Middle School, the northernmost school in the district, is located on the west side, on the same road as Davis Middle School. Scott prides itself on the technology that is available for the students with computer labs and the possibility for the students to explore television and newspaper production (RPS 205, 2006).

Turner Middle School is located on the northeast side of town where a majority of the new development in the city is occurring, including higher priced homes, shopping, and recreational activities. Turner promotes community through the use of advisory groups, teacher advocates, home base, and circle groups, which provide opportunities for staff to meet with students in smaller groups. Affective education is a highly prized part of each school day (RPS 205, 2006).

Springfield Middle School is closest to downtown and is between industrial and neighborhood areas on the east side of the river. The building is old and looks like the typical brick two-story school buildings of the past. Springfield concentrates on “creating an atmosphere for learning and educating for continuous improvement” (RPS 205, 2006).

While Tregay Middle School is located in the northern portion of the city, it is the southernmost middle school on the east side of the river. It is still close to the downtown area and Springfield Middle School. Tregay was built in the 1950s with additions in the next few decades. “Developing skills and

instilling positive attitudes to be lifelong learners” remains the focus of Tregay Middle School (RPS 205, 2006). As seen in Appendix G, there is no neighborhood middle school available for the southern part of the city, nor the town of Fairfield (pseudonym) (RPS 205, 2006).

Achievement Status of the Schools

This section describes each school based on scores from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). This test, given every spring, is the basis for determining the yearly progress of the students at each school. Schools will be discussed based on whether they are Achieving or Underachieving. Achieving schools are those which have overall ISAT scores above the 50% passing benchmark and are described as high performing or achieving schools. Underachieving schools have failed to reach the 50% criteria for overall test performance, whether or not an individual category is at or over the acceptable level.

An overall comparison of participating middle schools using a three-year snapshot is provided in Table 6. By tracking the schools for three years, a complete picture of one 6-8th grade cycle is available for analysis. It is important to note that while a school may be placed in an overall Achieving or Underachieving category, this may not account for all sub areas. For example, Tregay Middle School had a 47.6% pass rate overall in 2003, although 7th grade science results showed a 63.5% pass rate for the same year.

Table 6

ISAT Achievement

School	% passing ISAT 2002	% passing ISAT 2003	% passing ISAT 2004	3 year ave. pass rate	Classification
Turner	51.7	59.9	63.7	58.4	Achieving
Davis	50.8	57.9	59.0	55.9	Achieving
Tregay	38.3	47.6	55.9	47.3	Under- Achieving
Springfield	41.8	42.5	47.7	44.0	Under- Achieving
Falk	42.8	45.2	51.2	46.4	Under- Achieving
District Average	41.3	47.6	51.9	46.9	NA
State Average	62.0	65.3	67.2	64.8	NA

(ISBE, 2005)

On the other hand, Tregay scores showed 55.9 % of students overall met or exceeded standards in 2004, even though 8th grade math only achieved a 30.3% pass rate.

Overall, the students of this district consistently score below the state average on the ISAT, as seen in Table 6. Over the past three years the district has averaged 17.9% behind the state in overall performance – with a district average of 46.9%, and a State average of 64.8% (ISBE, 2005).

Achieving Schools

Achieving schools have received overall ISAT test scores averaging at or above the 50th percent mark for the academic years 2002-2004.

Turner Middle School identifies itself as a leader in academics within the district. Turner has consistently met state goals for achievement and has demonstrated an increase in that achievement over the 2002-2004 school years. The goal of this school is to “prepare students for future academic success” by basing the curriculum on the state and national standards (RPS 205, 2006).

The middle school concept is embraced by the faculty and staff of the school. Advisory, interdisciplinary teaming, and block scheduling are critical to the success of Turner students. The staff “sets the standards for excellence” and models lifelong learning for the students in cooperation with the administration, which provides staff development opportunities which encourages teachers to update their skills (RPS 205, 2006).

Turner has a low truancy rate and attendance is higher than the district average. The school theme is “Turner Means Success” (RPS 205, 2006). Test scores for Turner have remained above the district average, although 8th grade math has struggled to retain its 50% status.

Davis middle school prides itself on following “the middle school concept of placing students in small teams with a core group of teachers” (RPS 205, 2006). This school holds the special distinction of housing the

gifted program for the district at the middle school level. Performance results must also be viewed with this knowledge. While Davis is not viewed as a magnet school, students must test into the gifted and talented program available at this school.

Davis is on the west side of the river in one of the oldest schools in the district, which resembles the older high school buildings within the district. Davis maintained Achieving status for the 2002-2004 academic years; however, it is worth noting that all scores from the student population are counted together. There is no separation in overall reported scores for students in the gifted and talented program provided in the data.

Underachieving Schools

Underachieving schools have not averaged scores on the ISAT at or above the 50% pass mark overall during the 2002-2004 academic years. Underachieving schools had the highest mobility rates and the highest truancy rates among the five participating middle schools. These schools were also the larger schools by population count and maintained the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students among the participating schools. The average number of students per classroom, however, was the lowest among the schools, indicating that these schools had a smaller teacher-to-student ratio.

Falk Middle School is a magnet school for the district. Falk maintains the highest average of economically disadvantaged students, while providing

the smallest average 8th grade class size among the five middle schools in this study. The mission of Falk is to provide a “challenging, nurturing and safe environment where adolescent students have the opportunity to excel academically and socially” (RPS 205, 2006). The school knows that it has had some difficulty in the area of student achievement and announced the goal to “raise ISAT scores this year in Reading, Writing and Mathematics” on the opening screen of their website (RPS 205, 2006).

Being a magnet school, the district encourages all students to seek admission to Falk Middle School. Falk is on the West side of the river in a lower to middle income area that has much potential for growth, with open land and forest still remaining near the school grounds. This is the newest middle school building and was constructed for ease of team movement. It also has many amenities associated with a new school, including outdoor recreational facilities.

Springfield Middle School held the highest average mobility rate for the middle schools within this study and has similar patterns for chronic truancy numbers. This middle school is on the East side of town in a building identical to that of Davis Middle School. It is an older building that is landlocked, bordered by a busy street, a hospital, and neighborhood homes. It looks like an old high school building and was not created to house teacher teams in the way that the middle school philosophy would advise. The school is proud of its ethnic diversity, parental involvement, and learning atmosphere, as noted in the mission statement (RPS 205, 2006).

Springfield has maintained one of the lowest average class sizes but has not been able to break the cycle of low test scores. Springfield consistently scores in the 40th percent or lower in math results. Although test scores at Springfield improved each testing session during the 2002-2004 school years, the students have yet to achieve the 50% pass rate in overall ISAT performance. The school seeks continuous improvement, as student test scores are below district and state acceptable minimums.

Tregay Middle School has a “reputation for really caring about the individual student and his/her success” (RPS 205, 2006). This supports their assertion that the school is a “caring community partnership dedicated to educating and meeting the unique needs of early adolescents” (RPS 205, 2006). Tregay maintains the largest average class size at 26 students per classroom in 8th grade. Improvement on ISAT scores occurred each year in 2002-2004, with Tregay breaking the 50% benchmark in 2004. The three-year average still ranks this school as an underachieving school, but with the possibility of moving to achieving status if test scores continue to improve in the future.

Tregay Middle School is located on the east side of the city in a middle-class, mostly residential neighborhood. The neighborhood has nice parks and smaller to average sized homes in a moderate price range for this city. Tregay has the lowest average of minority students, the lowest mobility rate, and the second lowest average for economically disadvantaged students for middle schools in the district.

Description of Participating Staff Members

In this section, all staff who participated in the study are described in terms of the variables chosen for review. Participants included teamed teachers, specialists, support staff, and administrators. Descriptive results are displayed in Table 7. All information was self-reported on the study questionnaire.

Initial Certification

All staff members were asked to respond with their initial certification received upon university graduation, regardless of any other certificates received since graduation. Nearly half (47.1%) of all staff members were initially elementary certified. While most schools reflect this trend, Turner stands out with a plurality of teachers holding secondary education certification (45.2%), with only 38.1% having initial elementary certification. Also noteworthy is that all three underachieving schools employed higher than average “Other” initial certificate holders for the middle schools within this study. The “Other” category included certifications such as K-12 or Special Education initial certifications. Range for the Underachieving schools is 25%-27.6% for “Other” certificates as opposed to Achieving schools at 12.9%-16.7%.

Table 7

Demographic Description of Study Participants

Data	Turner	Davis	Tregay	Springfield	Falk	Overall Study
Initial Certificate						
Eled	N=16 38.1%	N=19 61.3%	N=15 46.9%	N=17 58.6%	N=20 37.7%	N=89 47.1%
Sec	N=19 45.2%	N=8 25.8%	N=9 28.1%	N=4 13.8%	N=19 35.8%	N=59 31.2%
Other	N=7 16.7%	N=4 12.9%	N=8 25%	N=8 27.6%	N=14 26.4%	N=41 21.7%
Teaching Experience						
0-10 yrs (early)	N=5 11.9%	N=12 38.7%	N=15 46.9%	N=12 42.9%	N=20 37.7%	N=64 34.4%
11-24 yrs (mid)	N=17 40.5%	N=10 32.3%	N=9 28.1%	N=7 25.0%	N=21 39.6%	N=64 34.4%
25+ yrs (late)	N=20 47.6%	N=9 29.0%	N=8 25.0%	N=9 32.1%	N=12 22.6%	N=58 31.2%
Teaming Experience						
0-2 yrs (beginning)	N=4 14.6%	N=14 57.7%	N=10 42.8%	N=5 24.6%	N=24 50.3%	N=57 40.4%
3-5 yrs (developing)	N=13 47.6%	N=2 8.2%	N=11 47.1%	N=12 59.1%	N=17 35.6%	N=55 39.0%
6+ yrs (mastering)	N=10 36.6%	N=8 32.9%	N=2 8.6%	N=3 14.8%	N=6 12.6%	N=29 20.6%
Age						
22-34 (young)	N=3 7.1%	N=6 19.4%	N=7 22.6%	N=8 29.6%	N=7 13.5%	N=31 16.9%
35-49 (mid)	N=9 21.4%	N=11 35.5%	N=9 29%	N=11 40.7%	N=24 46.2%	N=64 35.0%
50+ (mature)	N=30 71.4%	N=14 45.2%	N=15 48.4%	N=8 29.6%	N=21 40.4%	N=88 48.1%

Teaching Experience

The participating schools tend to have approximately one-third of the staff in each experience range with both early career (0-10 yrs) and mid career (11-24 yrs) equally accounting for 34.4% of the population. Late career, 25 years or more, accounted for 31.2% of the overall staff.

Combining the first two career stages provides for 68.8% of the overall middle school staff, though only Springfield displays similar results (67.9%). Turner is split almost in half with the combination of early and mid career, 52.4% and late career, 47.6%. Falk, the largest of the studied middle schools, maintains the lowest percentage of late career experienced staff at 22.6%.

Figure 3 displays the breakdown of the participating staff by career status, which demonstrates that approximately one-third of the staff are in each of the three categories: early, mid and late career.

An interesting dynamic is shown in Figure 4, when staff member age categories are overlaid with their career stage. Expectations would say that the two lines represented should mirror one another: young age = early career stage. This figure shows a trend of staff members in the mid to mature age categories without the equivalent experience associated with their age. This could reflect patterns of older students returning to school for certification or teachers “stopping out” of teaching for personal or other reasons, or some combination of these and other factors.

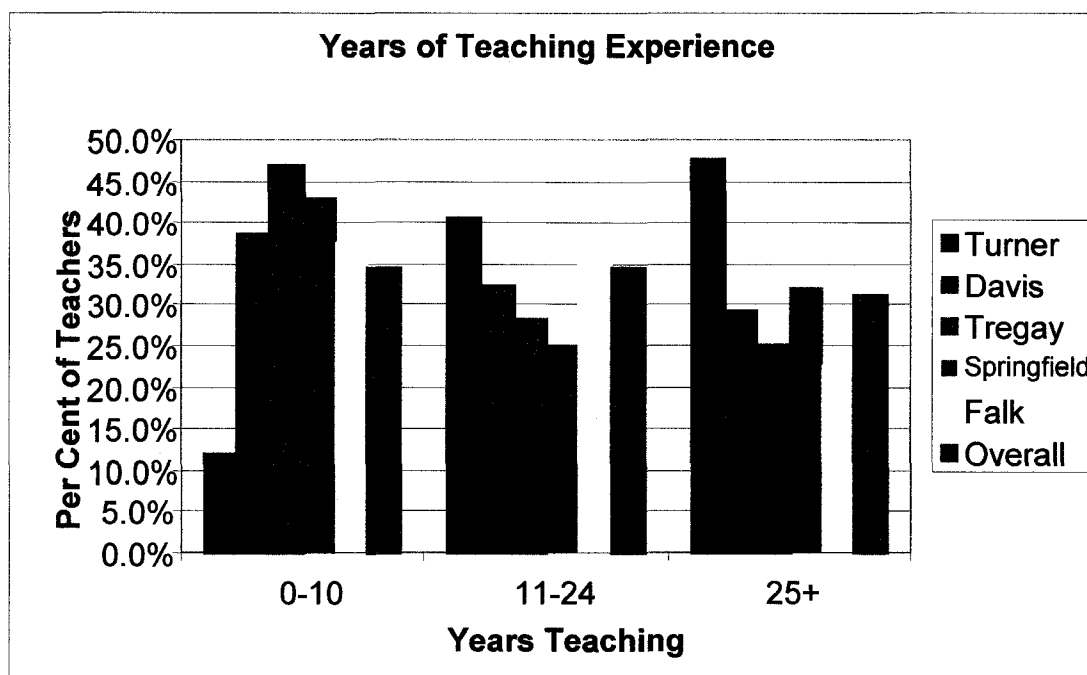


Figure 3. Years of Teaching Experience.

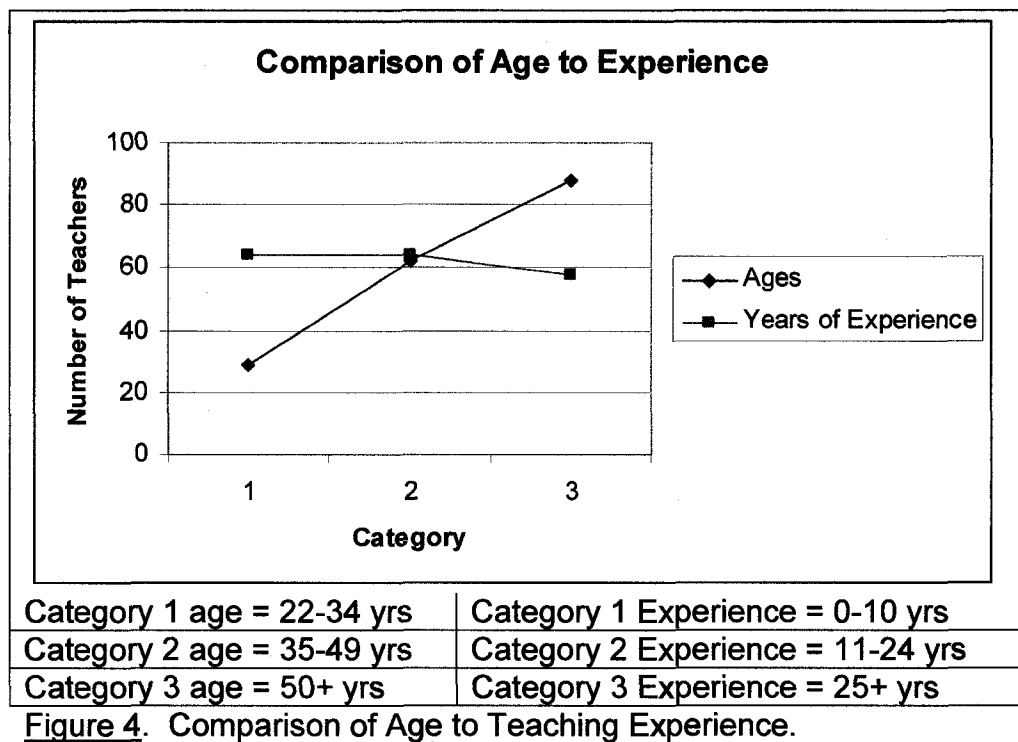


Figure 4. Comparison of Age to Teaching Experience.

Teaming Experience

Teachers within the participating schools were nearly identical overall in teaming experience percentages for the first two categories. Teachers who were just beginning their middle school teaming experience averaged 40.4%; developing stage averaged 39.0%. Those teachers with 6 or more years of teaming experience averaged 20.6%. Davis and Falk had substantially more staff at the beginning stage than the average. Davis was also significantly lower than the average percent of teachers in the developing category, as only 2 staffers self-identified in this category (8.2%).

Turner and Davis, the Achieving middle schools, together averaged 35.3% in the mastering stage, which was considerably above the overall average. Conversely, the Underachieving schools combined averaged 12.2% of their teachers at the mastering stage. Most notable is Tregay, whose staff self-identified only 2 members in the mastering category (8.6%).

Age

Staff in this study were predominantly aged 50 or older, representing nearly half of all participating staff (48.1%). Approximately 17% of the teachers were in the 22-34 age group and 35% were in the 35-49 age group. However, the different schools showed different patterns. For example, at Turner, over 70% of the teachers were age 50 or older while only 3 (7.1%)

were 22-34. Springfield, on the other hand, had fewer than 30% who were in the 50+ category and nearly 30% who were in the 22-34 age range.

Teachers and Ideology

This section focuses on the first research question to determine what curriculum ideologies are expressed by middle school teachers at the participating middle schools in Stephenson Public School District.

Table 8 shows the percent of staff in each ideological category. In all but one school, every ideology was present to some degree. Rational Humanism and Progressivism were the strongest ideologies present in all schools, without exception. The predominance of these two ideologies in a middle school context is not surprising, given the nature of these two perspectives, as described in Chapter 1.

Table 8

Middle School Staff Ideology

	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
Overall	N=5 2.7%	N=69 36.5%	N=75 39.7%	N=16 8.5%	N=24 12.7%

Ortho = Orthodoxy
 RH = Rational Humanism
 Prog = Progressivism
 Recon = Reconstructionism
 CT = Critical Theory

Students in middle school are developing reasoning skills as they attain metacognition and can think about the world around them in ways that are new and intriguing to them (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Rational Humanism proponents stress these skills within their classes and focus their studies on proven texts with instruction geared toward debate and in-depth reasoning. Students explore topics within the established curriculum, suggest ideas about the topics, and are able to defend their thoughts based on research and understanding (Eisner, 2002, pp. 63-64). For middle school teachers with Rational Humanism preferences, testing by multiple choice ISAT exams may seem contradictory to allowing students to express themselves to demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge required to make the grade. Middle school students would follow a common curriculum in this ideology, as there is a belief in a certain set of knowledge and texts that all students should attain while in grades 6-8. Rational Humanism proponents might argue that this would guarantee free and equal education to all students, regardless of SES, ethnicity, and location (Eisner, 2002, p. 66).

Progressivism focuses on the child and active learning, which is a natural fit for the middle school theory. Progressivist teachers feel a need to structure the curriculum in ways that would involve students both mentally and emotionally, as these two components are deemed inseparable in this ideology. Students should interact, expand and transform the curriculum suggested by the teachers – no longer a static or structured curriculum. The classroom should be a model for democracy that would

offer children appropriate opportunities to formulate their own rules for social living, that internal and personal needs should be respected in the creation of learning activities, that group processes should be fostered so that children learn how to use collective intelligence to cope with problems in which their peers had an equal interest. (Eisner, 2002, p. 70)

Social purposes for schooling are very important for Progressivists.

Problem-based learning is therefore critical to the curriculum. Providing real-life scenarios and experiences enhance the learning process by allowing students to interact with the world at large. In order to provide authentic and rich learning experiences, the teacher must know the students in the classroom. The artistry of the teacher is critical to the success of the Progressivist's ideals. The teacher is creating the curriculum on the go as students grow and develop throughout the course of a unit. Using the experiences within the classroom and curiosities of the students, the teacher designs activities and investigations that will appeal to and engage the mind of the variety of students within the classroom (Eisner, 2002).

Progressivism for middle school students is demonstrated by teachers in instructional practice through the use of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) or differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2003). Independent study within differentiation provides the rich contextual experience Dewey and his Progressives were hoping to achieve. Progressivist teachers struggle with the national standards and ISAT tests, as do their Rational Humanism counterparts, but for very different reasons. Progressivists are focused on

stimulating the mind of the child through free expression and topical interests which may or may not be geared to content that is tested on the state tests. Teaching to the test would be complete anathema to progressivists.

While Critical Theory preferences were held by only 12.7% of the population, it is important to investigate the relationship of Critical Theory to middle school and Progressivism. As Eisner (2002) notes, "In some ways the directions in which Critical Theory would take the schools resembles the social side of Progressive educational ideology" (p. 75). Critical Theorists speak out loudly against the ills of the schools and "emancipating those affected by the schools from the school's debilitating practices" (p. 73). Critical Theorist teachers might believe those students in middle school who are not of the "power elite" would not be serviced in the traditional school setting and are therefore not receiving the free public education guaranteed to all citizens. They may see this evidenced by a lack of choice in curriculum content, authority, and "distorted view of American history that in turn undermines the kind of social consciousness needed to bring about change" (Eisner, p. 74).

As mentioned previously, Turner was the only middle school to meet the criteria for an overall ideological classification, with 46.5% staff members rating Progressivism as their number one choice in regard to the aims, goals and purposes of educating middle school students. Progressivism held an 18.5% lead over Rational Humanism, the next highest ranking ideology. All

other schools battled between Rational Humanism and Progressivism, with differences ranging from 6.5% to 0%; a true deadlock occurred at Springfield Middle School. While Davis maintained a 6.5% difference leaning toward Rational Humanism, the difference was not great enough to declare an overall ideological classification for this study, as only 35.5% of the staff members ranked Rational Humanism as their first choice, followed closely by Progressivism at 29% and Reconstructionism at 22.6%.

Influences on Teacher Ideology

The influences on ideology for this study focused on the areas of the type of training program completed, the years of professional experience, the length of time teachers have served on a particular middle school team, and the age of staff members. This section uses chi-square analysis to investigate potential relationships between these identified variables and ideological preference in response to the second research question posed in this study.

Certification and Ideology

Table 9 provides data concerning relationships that may exist between initial certification and ideological preference.

The chi-square analysis indicated no statistical significance, supporting the idea that initial certification program does not appear to be statistically related to ideological choice for certified staff. Whether a teacher was certified

in elementary education, secondary education, or held another certification did not seem to be a factor in ideological preference.

Table 9

Chi-Square Test for Ideology by Initial Teacher Certification

CERT	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
ELED	N=1 1.2% AR -0.833	N=33 40.7% AR 0.606	N=31 38.3% AR -0.547	N=6 7.4% AR 0.258	N=10 12.3% AR 0.179
SEC	N=3 5.2% AR 1.094	N=20 34.5% AR -0.275	N=27 46.6% AR 0.507	N=3 5.2% AR -0.441	N=5 8.6% AR -0.679
OTHER	N=1 2.4% AR -0.130	N=13 31.7% AR -0.524	N=18 43.9% AR 0.166	N=3 7.3% AR 0.161	N=6 14.6% AR 0.556
Chi-Square = 4.300 p value = .829					

All certification holders tended towards Rational Humanism (RH) or Progressivism (Prog), equaling 78.9% of all participating staff members. Figure 5 displays ideological choice to further conceptualize the homogeneity of the middle school staff in these two ideologies. The outlying Orthodoxy and Reconstructivist teachers comprise under 10% of the population when combined. The Critical Theory staff may lean toward agreement with Progressivist staff in decision-making circumstances, which would increase those teachers' numbers to approximately 54% within the middle schools.

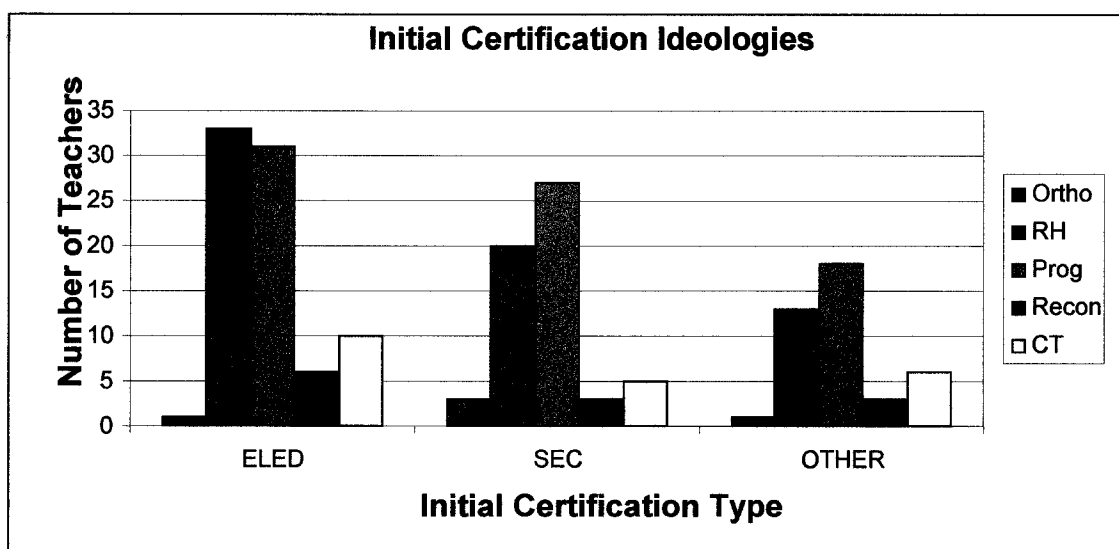


Figure 5. Initial Certification Ideologies.

While not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that Elementary certification holders were the only group to select Rational Humanism as their primary classification. Both Secondary and Other certifications ranked Progressivism as their primary classification.

Experience and Ideology

A chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between teaching experience and ideology, as displayed in Table 10. Chi-square analysis indicates no statistically significant relationship between ideological choice and beginning (0-10 years), middle career (11-24 years) and late career (25+ years) stage. The category time frames are similar to the age brackets used for analysis in age categorical questions. However, the Critical Theory staff members at the late career stage do bear an investigation

in this instance as their adjusted residual value is greater than |2|, indicating a potential area for further investigation.

Table 10

Chi-Square Test for Ideology by Teaching Experience

Tch Exp	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
0-10 yrs	N=1 1.6% AR -0.533	N=22 35.5% AR -0.076	N=29 46.8% AR 0.641	N=6 9.7% AR 0.577	N=4 6.5% AR -1.265
11-24 yrs	N=1 1.5% AR -0.582	N=30 46.2% AR 1.354	N=22 33.8% AR -0.961	N=6 9.2% AR 0.461	N=6 9.2% AR -0.649
25+ yrs	N=3 5.4% AR 1.188	N=14 25.0% AR -1.379	N=25 44.6% AR 0.361	N=2 3.6% AR -1.104	N=12 21.4% AR 2.030
Chi-Square = 15.148 p value = .056					

The pattern in the table seems to indicate that late career teachers might be more inclined toward Critical Theory and Orthodoxy ideologies than expected and less inclined toward Rational Humanism and Reconstructionism than expected, an interesting pattern given the overall findings. Stephenson School District maintains over one-third of its middle school teachers from the five participating schools within the late career stage category, and over 20% of those teachers in this study self-identified as believing in the Critical Theory principles.

Overall, the analysis results were smaller than the tabled value and were therefore not statistically significant, although in this table, the probability level of .056 is approaching significance.

Teaming Experience and Ideology

Teaming Experience for this study was determined by the total number of years that an individual had been in a teaming situation, whether or not it was the teacher's current team. Data were gathered for both current team and total years of teaming experience; however, due to the reorganization of one middle school, current team data would be unreliable. Falk Middle School changed all teams the year of this study; therefore all teachers from this school indicated only three to six months of experience with the current team. The overall teaming experience data provided more appropriate data for this study.

Chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if the number of years a teacher was part of any teaching team was significantly related to which ideology was chosen by the individual members. As the results indicate in Table 11, there appears to be no statistically significant relationship between ideology and years that a teacher has been on a team.

This study did not investigate whether or not the teaching team had been intact or whether membership had shifted during the teacher's tenure. Overall, 79% of teachers within this district fell into the ideological categories of Progressivism and Rational Humanism, which made teachers in the other

three categories more uncommon, as seen in earlier analyses, but not “beyond what you would expect by chance” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 207).

Table 11

Chi-Square Test for Ideology by Teaming Experience

Team	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
0-2	N=1 1.7% AR -0.232	N=20 34.5% AR -0.482	N=27 46.6% AR 0.714	N=4 6.9% AR 0.112	N=6 10.3% AR -0.428
3-5	N=1 1.9% AR -0.142	N=22 41.5% AR 0.365	N=21 39.6% AR -0.109	N=2 3.8% AR -0.783	N=7 13.2% AR 0.184
6+	N=1 3.7% AR 0.539	N=11 40.7% AR 0.196	N=8 29.6% AR -0.893	N=3 11.1% AR 0.934	N=4 14.8% AR 0.370
Chi-square = 3.940 p value = .862					

Age and Ideology

A fourth chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if age of the teacher was statistically related to ideological choice. The results reported in Table 12 indicate no apparent statistical significance for age of teachers and chosen ideology. The teacher's self-selected ideological rankings do not suggest any relationship with the individual's age. The ages of the members at the participating middle schools are skewed heavily in favor of mature (50+)

members. As displayed in Figure 6, of the 179 staff members participating in this study question, nearly half (49%) are aged 50+.

Table 12

Chi-Square Test for Ideology by Teacher Age

Age	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
22-34	N=0 0.0% AR -0.900	N=9 31.0% AR -0.330	N=16 55.2% AR 1.051	N=2 6.9% AR -0.178	N=2 6.9% AR -0.829
35-49	N=3 4.8% AR 0.964	N=24 38.7% AR 0.545	N=24 38.7% AR -0.453	N=6 9.7% AR 0.523	N=5 8.1% AR -0.949
50+	N=2 2.3% AR -0.292	N=29 33.0% AR -0.268	N=36 40.9% AR -0.223	N=6 6.8% AR -0.336	N=15 17.0% AR 1.272
Chi-Square = 7.285 p value = .506					

The 50+ group of staffers were dispersed among all five ideologies, exhibiting the same tendencies as the overall participating staff with nearly three-fourths self-identified in the two primary categories of Rational Humanism (33.0%) and Progressivism (40.9%). One interesting attribute for the 50+ group: over 17% were in Critical Theory, which is more than double the percent of Critical Theory teachers in the other two age groups combined.

Also interesting to note is that more than half of the young age group (22-34) self-identified as Progressivist and none identified in the Orthodoxy ideology. These patterns, while not statistically significant, might warrant further investigation.

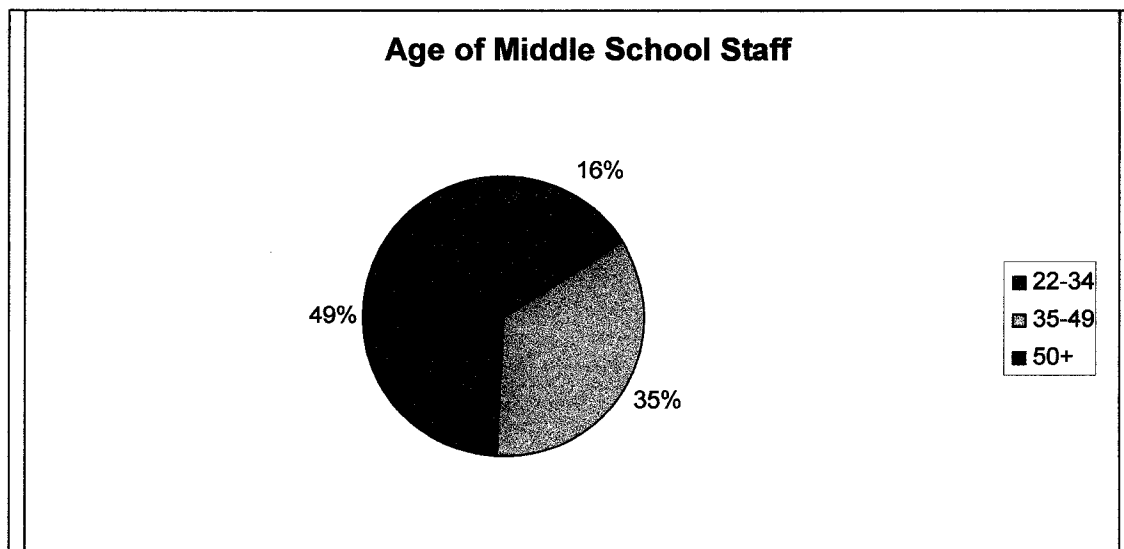


Figure 6. Age of Staff Members.

Team and School Ideology

To ascertain the nature of ideological congruency within teams and schools, this section will describe the staff members and individual teams based on their congruency with the overall ideology expressed by each school.

Overall school ideologies were indistinct in four of the five schools, as the staff members were widely scattered among the ideologies, as presented in Table 13. “Indistinct” indicates that there is no clear pattern of preference for one ideology over another by a margin of 10% or greater, the standard for this study. Turner indicated an 18.6% difference between the two highest ranked ideologies. This met the 10% requirement; therefore the school received a primary classification. Davis maintained the next greatest

difference in ideological scores, but only achieved a 6.5% difference, not meeting the 10% standard. This school was not given a primary classification but was listed as “Indistinct” in ideology.

Table 13

All Staff and School Ideologies

	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT	Classification
Turner	N=1 2.3%	N=12 27.9%	N=20 46.5%	N=3 7%	N=7 16.3%	Progressive
Davis	N=1 3.2%	N=11 35.5%	N=9 29.0%	N=7 22.6%	N=3 9.7%	Indistinct
Tregay	N=0 0%	N=12 37.5%	N=11 34.4%	N=1 3.1%	N=8 25%	Indistinct
Springfield	N=1 3.3%	N=11 36.7%	N=11 36.7%	N=3 10%	N=4 13.3%	Indistinct
Falk	N=2 3.8%	N=23 43.4%	N=24 45.3%	N=2 3.8%	N=2 3.8%	Indistinct
Overall	N=5 2.7%	N=69 36.5%	N=75 39.7%	N=16 8.5%	N=24 12.7%	Indistinct

Table 13 also evidences some interesting patterns for the Orthodoxy, Reconstructionism, and Critical Theory membership. In the Orthodoxy category, no school had more than 5%. In the Reconstructionism category, Davis represented nearly a quarter (22.6%) of its teachers while all other schools had less than 10%. In the Critical Theory category, Tregay had one-fourth identified.

Turner Middle School had the only identifiable overall school ideology, as 46.5% of the staff held Progressivism as their first ranking on the q-sort, a

difference of 18.6% between Progressivism and Rational Humanism. This met the 10% standard for determining a primary classification for ideology.

All other middle schools fell into the category of Indistinct. Differences among ideologies were 6% or less between the top two ideologies ranked by the staff at each school, which did not meet the 10% standard established for this study. Davis had a core of Reconstructionism followers, while Tregay held a strong nucleus of Critical Theory staffers. Springfield realized a tie among staffers in the Rational Humanism and Progressivism categories. Falk's results displayed a true split, as only one person differed between Rational Humanism and Progressivism, representing 88.7% of the population, while only just over 10% of the staffers held any of the other three ideological categories.

The indistinct classification becomes obvious when represented graphically in Figure 7. The pink and orange bars, representing Rational Humanism and Progressivism, respectively, are nearly equivalent in all schools except Turner.

Overall staff results are representative of the teamed teachers' results in four of the five schools. Tregay was able to define itself as Rational Humanistic only when the teamed teaching staff was analyzed out of the whole, as noted in Table 14. In this case, disagreement occurs between classroom (core) teachers versus those who may hold other positions in the school (encore and specialists), such as school counselors, resource teachers, and the like.

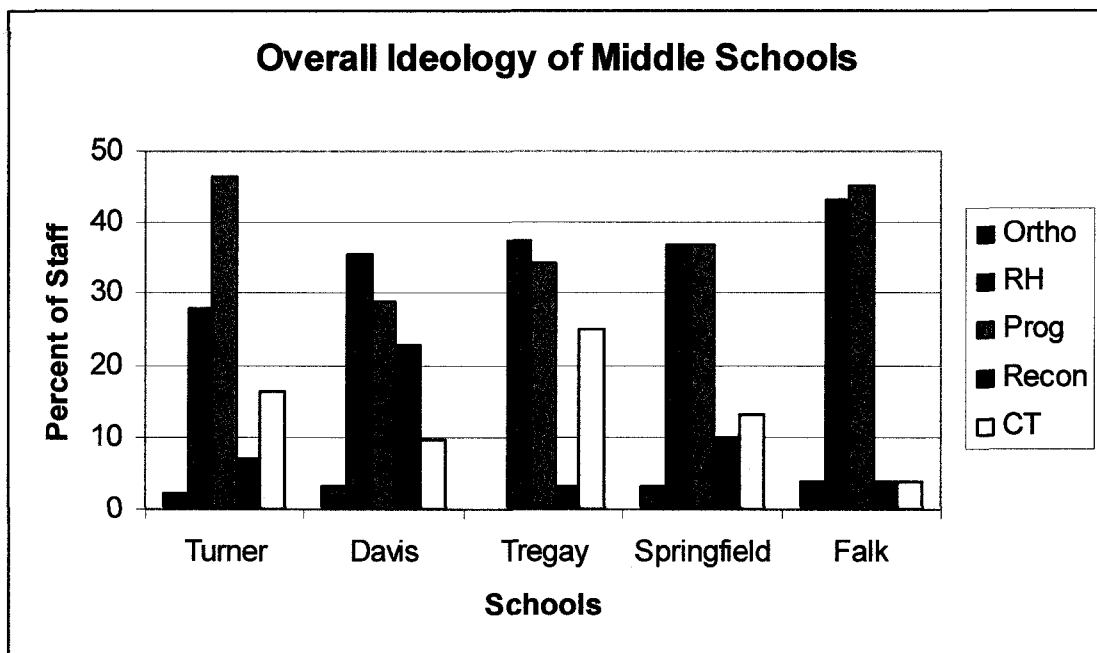


Figure 7. Overall Ideology of Individual Middle Schools.

Table 14

Middle School Team Ideologies

Achieving School	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT	Congruency Rating	Primary Classification
TURNER							
T1			N=2			C	Prog
T2			N=4			C	Prog
T3		N=2				C	RH
T4			N=1		N=3	WC	CT
T5		N=1	N=1			WC	Prog
T6		N=3	N=1			WC	RH
T7		N=1	N=1			D	Indistinct
T8			N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
Turner Overall		N=7 31.8%	N=11 50%		N=4 18.2%	NA	Progressive
DAVIS							
D1		N=1	N=3			WC	Prog
D2		N=1	N=3			WC	Prog
D3	N=1	N=3				WC	RH
D4		N=1	N=1	N=2		D	Indistinct
D5		N=1		N=2	N=1	D	Indistinct
D6		N=2		N=1		D	Indistinct
Davis Overall	N=1 4.3%	N=9 39.1%	N=7 30.4%	N=5 21.7%	N=1 4.3%	NA	Indistinct

(continued on following page)

Table 14 (continued)

Underachieving School	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT	Congruency Rating	Primary Classification
TREGAY							
TR1			N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
TR2		N=1		N=1		D	Indistinct
TR3		N=1	N=2			D	Indistinct
TR4		N=1			N=1	D	Indistinct
TR5		N=2	N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
TR6		N=2	N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
TR7		N=2	N=1		N=2	SD	Indistinct
Tregay Overall		N=9 40.9%	N=6 27.3%	N=1 4.5%	N=6 27.3%	NA	Rational Humanism
SPRINGFIELD							
S1		N=3				C	RH
S2			N=4			C	Prog
S3		N=2				C	RH
S4			N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
S5			N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
S6		N=1	N=1			D	Indistinct
S7		N=2	N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
S8			N=1	N=1		D	Indistinct
Springfield Overall		N=8 38.1%	N=9 42.9%	N=1 4.8%	N=3 14.3%	NA	Indistinct
FALK							
F1		N=4	N=1			WC	RH
F2		N=3	N=1			WC	RH
F3		N=1	N=4			WC	Prog
F4		N=1	N=3			WC	Prog
F5		N=1	N=2			D	Indistinct
F6	N=1	N=1	N=2			D	Indistinct
F7		N=4	N=1	N=1		D	Indistinct
F8		N=2	N=3	N=1		D	Indistinct
F9		N=2	N=1		N=1	D	Indistinct
F10	N=1	N=2	N=2		N=1	SD	Indistinct
Falk Overall	N=2 4.3%	N=21 44.7%	N=20 42.6%	N=2 4.3%	N=2 4.3%	NA	Indistinct

Table 14 breaks down each school's teams by ideology, declaring whether or not the team was congruent or diverse. This was done according to the system outlined in Chapter 3. Individual results were compared with team member results to define a team ideology. If all members were in agreement, ranking the same ideology as primary, the team was declared Congruent, noted by a C in the contingency rating column.

To receive a Weak Congruency rating, WC, a team needed to have minimally 75% of its membership in agreement with either primary ideology or 75% of the level 5 or 4 rankings for each of the four questions on the q-sort. For example, Turner T4 is WC team based on 75% of the membership aligning to Critical Theory ideology.

On the other hand, Turner T5, a two-member team, could not meet 75% requirement based on primary ideology agreement. The WC rating for this team needed to be based on rankings of the q-sort questions. This team agreed on rankings of 5 or 4 for Progressivism ideology on the q-sort, as shown in Table 15. This team only agreed on 50% of the Rational Humanism questions. Individual teachers are cited using the team code and alphabetical identity based on number of members within the team. For T5, a two-person team, members are T5A and T5B.

Classification Diverse (D) was applied to teams with 50%-74% agreement by primary ideology classification or q-sort question rankings. An example of this ranking is evidenced by Tregay TR3 in which only 66.7% of the members were in agreement. Turner T7 demonstrates a two-member

team that did not meet the criteria for WC, as they were split between Rational Humanism and Progressivism for each member's primary category. T7 failed to meet the 75% standard for WC status, unlike T5.

Table 15

Team T5 Q-Sort Results

Question #	T5a RH	T5b RH	T5a Prog	T5b Prog
1			4	4
2	4	4	5	5
3			5	4
4	4	5	5	4

Strongly Diverse (SD) teams were identified as having fewer than 50% of the members in agreement. Only two teams held this distinction; both were from Underachieving schools. Falk F10 ranks as SD with one member in Orthodoxy, two in Rational Humanism, two in Progressivism, and one in Critical Theory. At the highest percentage, only one-third of the team holds ideological congruence.

Primary classification is based upon agreement of team members. Only teams with C and WC ratings could be measured for classification, as the D and SD categories provided no basis for judgment. D and SD teams were given a primary classification of Indistinct.

WC ratings were given the primary classification according to agreement levels within the team. Using the example again of T5, the two

members most agreed upon Progressive rankings from the q-sort.

Therefore, the primary classification for T5 is Progressive.

Percentages of teamed teachers in each ideology are displayed in the final row of each section. These percentages were used to compute overall primary classification ratings for each school. Turner, at 50%, once again displayed a Progressive classification, stronger than the classification identified by the overall staff of the school (46.5%; see Table 8). Although all of Tregay's teams were indistinct, the teachers as a body represent a classification of Rational Humanism, with 40.9% in agreement. The next highest ranking ideology for Tregay was a tie between Progressivism and Critical Theory at 27.3%. This distinction displays a greater affinity of teamed teachers toward the Rational Humanistic ideology than the overall staff, which recorded a 37.5% Rational Humanism agreement (see Table 8).

While teams were congruent ideologically, there was a diversity of age, teaching experience, and/or certification type evident in all of the teams. In reviewing the individual team data, there is no evident pattern to team formation, as some teams were diverse only in one area, while other teams represented widespread diversity in all variables.

Achieving Schools

The first two middle schools examined in this section are the Achieving schools: Turner and Davis. Turner's teachers favored Progressivism strongly enough to develop a primary classification for the teams as Progressive, as

displayed in Table 14. All teams at Turner were either two- or four-person teams based upon grade level, with the two-person teams in the 6th grade. All teams participated in the study. Seven of the eight teams at Turner had at least one teacher from the Progressivist view giving input on decisions. No teacher identified Orthodoxy or Reconstructionism as primary to his or her teaching.

Only one team at Turner did not host a Progressivist (T3). Teams 4 and 8 provide an example of the complexities of ideologies in that Progressivism and Critical Theory may both hold certain aspects of education in the same regard, but may also represent different views on the aims, goals and role of the curriculum or teacher. This is evident in the Weak Congruency ranking of T4 where the four-person team was like-minded in at least 75% of the questions posed on the q-sort.

Davis Middle School did not realize a distinct classification as the teachers differed among Rational Humanism, Progressivism and, surprisingly, Reconstructionism. The representations of Rational Humanism and Progressivism are in-line with the overall results noted in Table 13. The five teachers at Davis identified as Reconstructionist represent nearly 56% of all teamed Reconstructionist teachers in all schools. One team from Davis did not participate to the extent they were able to be included in the study.

Davis maintained three teams at both WC and D ratings. All teams at Davis had a Rational Humanist representative. All D teams also included at least one Reconstructionist member. It is interesting to note that no team with

a Reconstructionist member was identified as C or WC in team ideology for any of the middle schools examined in this study.

Underachieving Schools

As mentioned earlier, Tregay established a classification as Rational Humanist when only teamed teachers were analyzed. Critical Theory followers tied for second in this building, claiming the same percentage as Progressivism. This is also unique among the five schools. Two teams chose not to participate or did not participate to the extent that team data could be included in the study. The teams were both two-member teams. *All* participating teams were diverse, as identified in Table 14, a feat that no other school accomplished whether the teams were in congruency or diversity categories.

Springfield's non-teamed staffers represented 50% of the Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Critical Theory ideologists. Even with removing these outliers, Springfield was indistinct in its ideological basis for schooling. This may be due to the poorer than average response rate from the staff at the school. Four out of twelve teams chose not to participate or did not participate to the extent that team data could be used for analysis in the study. From the teamed teachers at this school, Team 8 is a true study of opposites in regard to ideology and background. These two teachers were diverse in ideology – where one member was strongest in Progressivism, it was the partner's weakest score and vice versa for Reconstructionism. While

this middle school was predominantly Elementary certified, this team was also split in certification with one of only four secondary certified personnel from the building.

Three congruent teams were found at Springfield, representing all grade levels and team sizes. Two of the three teams held Rational Humanistic ideology; however, the overall environment of teamed teachers tended toward Progressivism.

Falk Middle School is the largest of the schools, maintains the largest number of teams (10) and number of members on a team (up to 6). All teams had members from both Rational Humanism and Progressivism. Of interest at Falk is that all Weak Congruency teams consisted of teachers holding Progressivism and Rational Humanism as their main ideologies. With some minor shifting of personnel, the teams could have achieved Congruency, if it was desired.

Shifting may not be helpful for the Diverse teams, as they are mostly Progressive, with only 1 Rational Humanism member represented on both teams. There is no marked distinction between Rational Humanism and Progressivism at Falk, as the teachers were locked at 43.4% Rational Humanism and 45.3% Progressivism. Due to this division, agreement on decision-making issues could be difficult for this school.

Table 16 presents a summary of teacher team congruency with an overall ideological classification, using only teamed teachers in the analysis. As mentioned in the individual school discussions, two of the schools were

able to achieve a primary classification using only responses for teamed teachers. This represents a shift from overall school classification which included all staff, in which Turner was the only school to maintain a primary classification.

Table 16

Team and School Ideological Congruence

Schools	Team Congruency with Overall School Ideology	Team Divergence with Overall School Ideology
Turner	Progressive teacher identified on 7 of 8 teams (87.5%)	No Progressive member on 1 of 8 teams (13.5%)
Tregay	Rational Humanism teacher identified on 6 of 7 teams (85.7%)	No RH member on 1 of 7 teams (14.3%)

Turner and Tregay represent different achievement categories; however, it is worth mentioning that Tregay reached Achieving status as a school for the 2004-2005 school year. For the other schools (Davis, Springfield, and Falk), the researcher could not look at congruence between team, and overall school ideology as no overall school ideology was identified.

Team Ideological Congruence and School Achievement Status

The final question addressed by this study was whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between ideological congruency and

school achievement status. Chi-square analysis was conducted to determine if a relationship between the two variables existed.

Ascertaining if a relationship existed between team ideological congruency and school achievement status was the essence of the study. As Table 17 indicates, there was statistical significance within that relationship.

Table 17

Chi-Square Test for Congruency by School Achievement Status

Ideological Congruency	Achievement Status		Total
	Achieving	Underachieving	
Yes	N=9	N=7	N=16
% of congruent teams	56.3%	43.8%	100.1%
% of all teams	23.1%	17.9%	41%
	AR 1.558	AR -.843	
No	N=5	N=18	N=23
% of diverse teams	21.7%	78.3%	100%
% of all teams	12.8%	46.2%	59%
	AR -1.232	AR .667	
Total	N=14	N=25	
	36%	64%	
Chi-Square = 5.101			
p value = .024			

Chi-square analysis yielded a significance of alpha .024, which met the $p < .05$ criteria established for this study. Congruent teams occurred more often in Achieving schools as compared to Diverse teams, which were more prevalent in Underachieving schools. Overall, there were more diverse teams in the study (59%), as well as more Underachieving schools (60%).

The chi-square analysis further supports the percentages and other chi-square analyses reported earlier, indicating that the congruency of ideology may be related to student achievement and overall school achievement status. Certification type, teaching experience, teaming experience, or age of the teachers appear not to be related to ideological congruence; however, the relationship between teaching experience and ideology could bear further investigation.

Chapter Summary

Findings based on the analysis of data were presented in this chapter. Data were organized into five sections: an overview of the district, students and teachers in section one with sections two, three, four, and five relating the findings of the study corresponding to each of the four questions posed. General characteristics of the district demographics were described, including poverty status, ethnicity of students, average class size, mobility, and truancy. Curriculum ideologies expressed by middle school teachers were described and analyzed using percentages, graphs, and chi-square to examine any relationships between expressed ideologies and other variables used in this study. Findings for the nature of ideological congruence within teams and schools were identified as well as the relationship between team congruence and school achievement status.

A summary of the findings, discussion of the conclusions and recommendations for further studies are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to discover whether a relationship exists among selected demographic variables, middle school teams' ideological congruence, and school achievement status. This could be an important association since middle school team formation is not a standardized practice.

This chapter is organized into six parts: summary of the study, summary of the findings, conclusions, implications for teaming, recommendations for further study, and a chapter summary.

Summary of the Study

Middle school teaming is an organizational feature at a majority of middle schools across the nation. The practice of creating the middle school team is typically left to the administration, with or without input from teachers already on the team (Jackson & Davis, 2000). This study delved into the aspect of team formation associated with individual teacher ideology and looked at team construction through a congruency lens. One urban district in northern Illinois was chosen for the study based on its relatively large size, proximity to the researcher and the diverse achievement status of middle schools as identified in the Illinois Report Card System.

Teachers at five middle schools agreed to participate in the study.

The teachers were given a study packet, including a questionnaire and q-sort, during mandatory faculty meetings and were asked to complete the paperwork in the proceeding 15-20 minutes. The questionnaire included demographic and team information in the following areas:

1. Personal and Professional demographics, which included initial teacher certification, teaching experience, teaming experience, and age, as well as any additional certifications that the individual teacher might hold. If the initial certificate was from out of state, the teacher was asked to identify the grade range for which the initial certificate was valid.
2. Team demographics, included school name, team name, grade, subjects taught, length of time on current team, and total number of years involved in a teaming structure.

Next, the teachers were asked to complete a forced choice q-sort to identify which of five ideologies (Eisner, 2002) they currently held. The teachers were asked to rank the choices under the four statements from most like their own ideas (5) to least like their own ideas (1). These data were then tabulated and each individual teacher was assigned an ideology based upon his/her highest scoring category. Ties were decided based upon strength of numbers within a given ideology.

Individual data were then cross-referenced to team data and a decision on team congruency was made based upon the strength of agreement or

disagreement. Chi-square analyses were made in the areas of teacher age, certification type, teaching experience in relation to ideological choice. Finally, chi-square analysis was conducted for ideological congruence of team members and student achievement.

Summary of the Findings

This section begins with a general overview and then proceeds to review the study guided by the four research questions. Each variable within question two is also discussed.

Overview

Teachers within the district were diverse in age, certification type, teaching experience, teaming experience, and ideology. Teams were diverse in their degree of ideological congruency and their range of ideological choice. The district was divided on format for teams at the various grade levels, particularly at the sixth grade level where some schools used two-teacher teams, while others used up to five-person teams.

Research Question #1: Ideologies in the Middle Schools

All five ideologies were represented in the middle schools within this district. Turner Middle School realized a primary classification of Progressivism due to the dominance of teachers within this ideology. Tregay

did not realize an ideology as a whole school but did achieve a Rational Humanism classification for teamed teachers.

Individual teachers in the participating schools as a whole were also divided ideologically, with 37% of staff members aligning with Rational Humanism, while 41% claimed Progressivism as their core focus, with the remaining teachers in the minority ideological categories of Critical Theory, 12%, Reconstructionism, 7% and finally Orthodoxy, 3%.

It is not that surprising to find Rational Humanism and Progressivism as the two main ideologies in middle schools. The education system is entrenched in both camps through the use of standards-based instruction associated with Rational Humanism, and teacher preparation programs and education experiences pushing for a student-centered, authentic and hands-on approach, associated with Progressivism. While teachers may use many Progressivist strategies for teaching students, the standardized tests are not authentic, nor do they mimic the teaching methods through which students have learned the content. The dominance of these two ideologies may be an understandable blend for practice and assessment.

Research Question #2: Teacher Attributes and Ideology

Four variables were selected for review in this study, including:

- a. Initial Certification
- b. Teaching Experience
- c. Teaming Experience
- d. Age

None of the four factors appeared to be statistically related to ideological preference, as probability values ranged from .056 to .829.

Initial Certification

The full range of ideologies was present in each certification type given in response to the questionnaire. Nearly half (47.1%) of all staff members were initially elementary certified. Turner hired a plurality of teachers holding secondary education certification (45.2%), which was the highest percentage of secondary certified teachers among all schools studied. Also noteworthy was the range of teachers hired in the "Other" category designation. "Other" certified teachers (K-12, special education) at underachieving schools ranged between 25%-27.6% of the teaching staff as opposed to 12.9%-16.7% at achieving schools.

Seven varieties of teaming arrangement by certification were found within the five middle schools. Most commonly found in certification-based teams was the Elementary and Secondary certification combined teams. Seventeen teams had this mix of certifications and were represented at all schools and all varieties of ideological congruence/diversity. Eleven teams were Elementary certified only and were found in both achievement statuses, as well as both congruent and diverse ideological categories. These two patterns (Elementary/Secondary, Elementary only) constituted the majority of the teams at 82%.

As noted in Chapter 4, Elementary certification holders favored Rational Humanism over Progressivism, which is the reverse for Secondary and Other certified teachers. Elementary students are first learning the structure of a classroom and how to be an orderly society, which may lead them into critical thinking skills and rational thought. Elementary schools across the United States may offer similar curricula, which may encourage the idea of a common core curriculum that Rational Humanists would prefer for the schools (Eisner, 2002).

The plurality of Secondary and Others who regarded Progressivism as their primary classification may stem from the idea that students should partake in the democracy of the classroom: helping to establish rules and norms; establishing group work abilities; and learning to respect individual differences (Eisner, 2002). Problem-based education, while explored in most certification programs, is central to Progressivism. Instruction of this nature is offered to students at the middle school since most have reached the stage of critical thinking where they are able to take multiple perspectives and debate varied sides to an issue (Kellough & Carjuzaa, 2006). This form of instruction is typically not appropriate for younger elementary students but lends itself to middle and secondary classrooms.

Teaching Experience

Chi-square results indicated no statistically significant relationship between ideology and teaching experience for this study. While most

teachers' ideology aligned with Rational Humanism or Progressivism, perspectives from Critical Theory, Reconstructionism and Orthodoxy were represented among participating teachers and staff at all levels of teaching experience.

Middle school teachers within the late career stage category represented approximately one-third of all teachers in the participating schools. Over 20% of those teachers in this study self-identified as believing in the Critical Theory principles, which bears investigation in this instance, as the adjusted residual value was greater than |2| within chi-square analysis. A probability level of .056 was achieved for this variable, approaching significance.

The 50+ population within this district may have aligned so heavily within Critical Theory as opposed to the younger teachers due to societal circumstances during their formative years. This group of teachers lived through radical times in the 1960s-1980s, which saw great change in societal norms from anti-war demonstrations, marches on the Capitol for civil rights, to the explosion of technology for both home and professional use. Critical Theorists are "almost always on the political left" and seek to "emancipate those affected by the schools from the school's debilitating practices" (Eisner, 2002, p. 73). These teachers would be speaking out against injustices within the school system for those underserved. Critical Theorists desire equal education for all so that any student would be able to assume leadership if it was so desired (Eisner, 2002).

Teaming Experience

Teaming experience did not correlate to ideological congruence. This study did not investigate whether or not the teaching team had been intact or whether membership had shifted during the teacher's tenure. Teachers who were just beginning their middle school teaming experience constituted 40.4%; developing stage comprised 39.0%. Those teachers with six or more years of teaming experience represented 20.6% of the participants. Underachieving schools averaged more teachers in the first two stages than did their Achieving counterparts. Achieving schools had higher percentages of teachers in the mastering stage than did the Underachieving schools. Chi-square analysis of this variable posted a probability value of .862, which indicates no relationship between ideology and teaming experience within this study.

Most research conducted on teaming relationships focuses on longevity of teams, claiming that the longer a team is together, the more effective that team becomes for both students and teachers (Erb & Stevenson, 1999; George, 1982; Jones, 1997; Pollak & Mills, 1997; Trimble & Irvin, 1996; White, 1997). While this study can not directly relate to other findings, the team with the longest intact time for the five participating middle schools was a two-member team that had been in existence for 12 years at Turner Middle School, an achieving school.

Age

Teachers ranged in age from 22-67 years old, with nearly 50% aged 50+. Mature teachers (50+) were fairly well distributed among the five schools and evenly distributed within achieving and underachieving schools.

Teams were typically diverse in age, and there appeared to be no particular pattern to age placement among team members at the schools. Chi-square analyses indicated no significant relationship between age and ideological preference with a probability value of .506. The teacher's self-selected ideological rankings do not suggest any statistical relationship with the individual's age.

Age and teaching experience were not identical possibly due to career changers, individuals returning to work, or other such instances that unevenly distributes the population to the mid (35-49) and mature (50+) categories. Results from the age variable realized similar results to teaching experience. The 50+ group of staffers self-identified over 17% in Critical Theory, which is more than double the percent of Critical Theory teachers in the other two age groups combined. Similar to teaching experience, it may be reasonable to attribute this distribution due to the social climate during the 50+ aged teachers' formative years. Two other ideological tendencies were attributed to the young teachers in the study: more than half of the young age group (22-34) self-identified as Progressive (55.2%); Orthodoxy was not selected as primary by any teacher in this age range (0%).

The young (22-34) age category demonstrated the strongest tendencies of all age groups. With over 55% of the teachers in this age group self-selecting Progressivism, the pattern may suggest that teachers are more focused on instructional practices that promote hands-on experiences and student-centered education. This may be a reflection of the educational experience from the teachers' K-12 experience or current thoughts on effective education from professional development or higher education settings.

While it is interesting to note that none of the young teachers selected Orthodoxy, only five teachers in all three categories combined ranked it as their primary classification. This equates to 2.8% of the population studied. It may be reasonable to believe that teachers representing Orthodoxy may not select public schools for their teaching career. If this study had included private or parochial schools, Orthodoxy teachers may have been greater in number.

Research Question #3: Ideological Congruency Among Teams And Schools

Stephenson District's mission statement represents a Reconstructionist ideology. None of the schools' overall ideologies were aligned with the district mission according to the individual school mission statements. The only middle school to express a certain ideology by almost half of the staff members was Turner Middle School, which was classified as Progressive. Turner's mission statement represents a Progressive ideology and its teachers

tend to fall in line with this mission. The principal at Turner looks for distinct traits aligned with Progressive ideals within the teachers interviewed for positions at the school.

When analyzing only teamed teachers, Tregay Middle School joined Turner in achieving a primary classification. Tregay rated a Rational Humanism classification for teamed teachers. Tregay's mission statement was also reflective of a Rational Humanistic ideology. Although the teamed teachers and school mission statement were aligned, the encore teachers and specialists at the school did not follow this pattern.

Springfield's mission statement represented the Rational Humanism ideology; however, the overall staff ranked Rational Humanism and Progressivism equally (36.7%) as their primary classifications. Even separating out the teamed teachers from other school staff, the classification was indistinct, as 38.1% of the teachers identified with Rational Humanism and 42.9% held to Progressivism.

Both Falk and Davis schools were indistinct, as the teachers did not have a common core ideology; rather they were scattered across the five ideologies. Both schools ranked Rational Humanism and Progressivism as their top two ideologies, with Rational Humanism holding a slight edge in each case. Mission statements for these two schools were also indistinct and did not provide ideological direction for the teachers.

The small number of schools in the study and the high percentage of schools in the indistinct range restricted the statistical analysis for this

research question. Given the variety of ideologies represented in every school, it is not surprising that most schools did not hold a primary classification.

Research Question #4: Team Congruency and School Achievement Status

The research presented in this study, based on Table 22, would indicate that there is a significant ($p < .024$) relationship between achievement status and team congruency of ideology. Ideologically congruent teams were more common in achieving schools, while diverse teams were heavily weighted in underachieving schools. The congruent teams were more homogenous in ideology even while diverse in terms of demographic characteristics.

Teachers on congruent teams should have a common foundation in beliefs about the purposes of education and agreement on goals for the future aligned with their ideological stance. This may prevent dissent among the teachers and provide for a more productive environment within the classroom and in team meetings. In addition, this may benefit the students since they would know the expectations in each classroom would be similar (Joseph et al, 2000). When the students are in a comfortable and supportive learning environment, it would be logical to believe that an acceptable achievement status would follow.

Conclusions

The relationship of ideological congruence of teams and achievement of schools was the essence of this study. This study has implications for the ways in which teams could be formed to encourage school achievement. For many middle schools, the need for improvement in achievement scores is immediate.

This study found that more often, teachers in the last stage of teaming experience (Mastering) were employed by Achieving schools (35.3%) versus Underachieving schools (12.2%). Most research currently says “it takes time” to develop effective teams (Achinstein, 2002; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Kasak, 1998; Crow & Pounder, 2000; Hausman & Goldring, 2001). These findings support the idea that teachers with greater teaming experience may indeed lead to greater school achievement. This study did not investigate whether or not the teachers within the mastering stage were on teams together or whether those teams had a history of longevity.

Past research points to the benefits of teaming experience. The possible connection with congruent ideological teams may lead to a faster time frame for achieving the benefits related by Murata (2002). As Murata states, working with the same set of individuals over an extended period of time “allowed the teachers to experiment in safety” (p. 74) and “the teachers came to trust and respect each other more than they had initially” (p. 73). These

same teachers were willing to devote extra time and effort “to achieve the depth of learning that they envisioned was the potential of teaming” (p. 74).

When teachers already agree on the foundational issues associated with education, trust and respect may be developed more easily, leading to more effective teaming relationships. Having congruence in ideology may lend itself to teams remaining together for longer periods of time. Felner et al.’s 1997 study found that longevity of teaming relationships led to students more often being engaged in instructional practices that are hands-on and challenging, which benefits the students.

In this study, Turner T8 represented the mastering stage of teaming experience, self-reported at 12 years. T8 was a diverse team at an Achieving school (see Table 14). Given that this team had two members, the individual’s strong philosophical stance appeared to have little influence on the other’s views; however it is not evident from this study when the individual teachers had formed their ideological positions. Research from Westheimer (1999) and Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell and Valentine (1999) suggest that effective teaming takes time but tends to influence team members to a “groupthink” mentality. Their claims were not supported in this instance.

Since many different teaming arrangements occur in the middle schools of the studied district, this research attempted to determine the extent to which ideological congruency was associated with school academic achievement, based on ISAT test results from the 2002-2005 School Report Cards,

published by the State of Illinois. The following conclusions are offered on the basis of the findings of the study:

1. Combinations of teachers for teams in terms of certification type, experience or age appeared to be unrelated to ideological congruence. Despite the intuitive opinion that long-term working relationships with teachers espousing different ideologies leads to individual ideological change, the findings of this study do not substantiate this idea. A range of ideologies was present at all schools in this study, regardless of the dominance of one or two ideologies within the building. In addition, congruent ideological teams showed variations among the three factors of age, experience and certification, similar to diverse ideological teams.
2. When teams are being created or new teachers are being added to existing teams, administrators and teachers may wish to look at the ideological background of the new team member, as congruence appears to have a significant relationship to achievement status of the school. Teams with ideological congruence appeared most often at achieving schools. Ideological congruency was apparent at all grade levels and in a variety of team organizational patterns. Whether the ideological congruence in this study occurred at the beginning of the teaming relationship, during the year(s) in which the team was together, or changed over time, the teaming process may

be made easier for future team construction if a foundation of ideological congruency is established.

Implications for Practice in Teaming

The results of this study might encourage teachers and administrators to look at the process of team formation. Teaming may advance into longer-term relationships when administrators have a better idea of how to group teachers to raise school achievement. Teaming is an important part of the middle school concept and may be improved through these findings. The results of this study would support the Homogeneous argument presented in Chapter 2.

As Hackmann et al. (2002) noted, "Teaming appeared most successful when teachers were compatible with each other" (p. 37) while maintaining demographic diversity. This study's findings support this claim. While other factors may affect team operation and effectiveness, the development of teaching teams as professional learning communities may be faster and smoother when developed through congruent ideologies. While team arrangement might focus on ideological congruency, diversity still can be apparent in demographics of the individual teachers, such as age, experience, and certification. This diversity provides a broad spectrum of experiences and ideas for the team to use in planning and conducting their school year, yet the homogeneity of ideological beliefs provides a foundation for discussions of curriculum and instructional practice.

When a team is searching for a new member, it might be preferable to consider the ideological base that guides the potential new member's professional practice in order to determine fit within the team. Although research presented earlier in this study provided arguments for both congruent and diverse ideological team composition, findings would suggest that the diversity of teachers remain in demographic aspects such as age, experience, or certification, and perhaps not in core values and beliefs about education.

Commitment was an issue discussed by both homogeneous and heterogeneous supporters. For the homogeneous side, the commitment to a common purpose prepares the teachers to work together and strengthens the working relationship of the team members (Achinstein, 2002; Pugach & Johnson, 1995; Rogers, Bowen, & Hainline, 1997). The teachers' commitment to each other fostered job satisfaction and increased the teachers' commitment to the field of education (Achinstein, 2002; Murata, 2002)

The heterogeneous side agreed that commitment on the part of teachers was critical to school success; however, they did not attribute commitment based on ideology. Teachers are committed to providing their students the best possible education and can do so because of professional commitment to each other and the students (Conley, Fauske & Pounder, 2004; Nolan Jr. & Meister, 2000; West, 2004; White, 1997). Commitment in Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell and Valentine's (1999) study translated into creating a set of team values from which to make decisions. While the teachers came from different ideological camps, they realized that there

needed to be a foundation for planning and decision making. This mirrors the belief of the homogeneous supporters.

Administrator training, particularly for those leading middle schools, might include considerations of teaching team formation practices—especially the importance of teachers' ideologies. Currently in the state of Illinois, administrators do not need to have any specific preparation for elementary, middle, or high school leadership in order to accept a position at the various levels of schooling. It is interesting to note that for the 2006-2007 school year, the administration did not change at the achieving schools. All congruent teams were kept intact at Turner. All diverse teams were split at the achieving schools, except one at Davis. Turner's principal attempted to align teachers based upon perceptions during interviews or observations of current teachers. The principal was not aware that teams were aligning based on ideology – the principal simply noticed that the results were positive.

The underachieving schools saw administrative changes at two of the three schools. The underachieving school which retained its principal maintained two congruent teams and one diverse team. All others were split, regardless of congruency status. At the other two underachieving schools, only 33% of the teams were changed. Perhaps some of the difficulties experienced by the underachieving schools stemmed from the frequency of administrative changes and changes in team composition or lack of changes as need be. When administration is not familiar with individual staff members, changes that possibly should be made might not occur as quickly as needed.

On the other hand, the new administration at Falk changed all teams upon arrival.

When teachers are focused on a common set of core values, the team might be able to function more competently and students are able to succeed academically. By allowing for ideological congruence in teams, the teachers may be able to achieve school success more readily and produce positive results in a shorter time frame than previously thought.

In this study, the particular ideology held by the team was not important. Congruent teams from Rational Humanism, Progressivism, and Critical Theory were found at the schools. These teams may or may not have agreed with the overall classification of the school or the school mission statement. What did appear to be important was simply that the teachers were in agreement on an ideology. These results suggest that it may be preferable to align teachers ideologically within the teams; however, no clear vision for a homogeneous or heterogeneous mix of teams in the overall school environment is evident from this study.

Schools that maintained an ideologically based mission statement that was congruent to the primary classification of the teachers tended to hold higher achievement levels than those that did not. This is apparent in Turner, primary classification Progressive - mission statement Progressive, and Tregay, primary classification Rational Humanism - mission statement Rational Humanism. Turner maintained Achieving status for the three years of ISAT data used to compile achievement rankings. Tregay by the third year

had risen to Achieving status; however, the school was placed in the Underachieving ranking due to the first two years of data. Davis, the other overall Achieving school, did not maintain a distinct ideological mission statement and was represented in all five ideological camps within its teamed teachers.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations for future research are made:

1. Further study should involve teachers from both suburban and rural districts to provide a broad spectrum picture of teaming scenarios. Using these other districts would increase the database of teacher teams from which to draw conclusions. It would also be interesting to discover if there was a certain ideological base that occurred in various types of districts. Also, because this study used a small number of schools, tendencies of achieving middle schools to hold an overall school ideology could not be ascertained. More schools are needed to review this aspect of teaming.
2. Through a larger research study, examining the phenomena of greater Critical Theory affiliation encountered in the 25 or more years teaching experience category and the 50+ age category could possibly be more defined. In addition, the absence of 22- to 34-year-old teachers in Orthodoxy may also be investigated.

Discovering whether these two results are related, a product of environment or upbringing would help to explain the results from this study.

3. Following an ideological congruent team from both an achieving and underachieving school, as well as an ideologically diverse team from each achievement status, would allow for an in-depth look at the teaching practices associated with each subgroup. This type of data would provide a rich description of ideology in action and possibly offer ideas for the betterment of all teams.
4. Receiving student input on the team of teachers from both ideological congruence levels and both achievement status schools would present an interesting and unusual comparison of the staff. This study could potentially answer Joseph et al.'s (2000) thoughts on ease of transition from class to class when students know the expectations are the same.
5. Since none of the demographic variables in this study evidenced any relationship to ideology, a study may be conducted using college elementary and secondary education majors to discover if their individual ideologies change during the course of the bachelor's program or if they already have a set ideology before entering higher education. A longitudinal study with this group upon first entering college as freshmen, regrouping as juniors when first entering major coursework, revisiting the q-sort upon graduation,

and finally, 3-5 years after being employed as teachers would provide an overall picture of ideological development of future teachers. This type of study would also speak to the variable nature that is assumed with an individual's ideology.

6. A study exploring administrators' views of teaming and team construction would be important for future use in the training of administrators.
7. If, as this study and past research suggests, teaming may be associated with student achievement, future studies might investigate the benefits, if any, of instruction in teaming strategies in the preservice preparation of middle school teachers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a summary of the study, which included the reviewed the four main questions researched. Conclusions from the data were then presented, followed by implications for teaming geared towards revising the current process for creating teams. In the last section, recommendations were made for further studies involving more schools from a variety of districts, following different teams at each achievement status, student perspectives on the teaming arrangement, and discovering when teachers may actually determine their ideological stance.

Changes to our educational system will continue, as schools are always searching for ways to improve. Teaming organizational structures at the

middle school offer two benefits: teaching teams have an impact on school academic achievement, and teams serve as a model for respectful interaction. When teams cannot collaborate due to differences in ideology, the model is inappropriate for the students. Teaming is predominant in the middle schools but is not effective in all situations. Changes are needed to organize teachers into teams focused on a shared purpose or goal that is reflective of individual ideology. This will lead to the formation of effective teams without the waiting period that most research has deemed as acceptable.

It is this researcher's hope that this study and future studies will offer schools methods of improving teaming so that students will not only benefit from the community atmosphere that is established when teachers collaborate, but realize greater academic success as well.

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APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER



NORTHERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

DEKALB, ILLINOIS 60115-2845

(815) 753-1619

FAX (815) 753-8594

Dear Middle School Teacher,

I would like to invite you to help me complete a research project about middle school teaming. I am examining relationships between teachers' curriculum and educational beliefs and the process of teacher teaming. This project will help you to reflect on what you really believe about your 'why you do what you do' philosophy of curriculum and teaching. It may also give your team a new topic for discussion at your next team meeting! Please help me to discover the intricacies of teacher team creation by participating in a short survey about your personal educational beliefs, without having your name attached to the piece of paper. Although the study is short, only 4 questions to rank, the implications for teaming practice may change the future of team construction.

Your total time commitment for this project should be under twenty minutes. You may elect to participate/decline from participation, as you may prefer, without any penalty or prejudice. Whatever your decision, please signify this choice by completing the consent form included in this envelope.

The project has these two components:

- Completion of the demographic questionnaire – team name, school name, certification type, number of years teaching and other similar questions.
- Completion of the survey – 4 ranking questions about your personal philosophy of curriculum.

Thank you in advance for your help and your enthusiasm in participating. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Okrasinski
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Teaching and Learning, NIU
Former Middle School Teacher
Email – mrsokra@aol.com
Home Phone – (815) 748-3474

Nina Dorsch, Chair Department of Teaching and Learning
Northern Illinois University
Email – Ndorsch@niu.edu
Office Phone – (815) 753-1619

Enc: Letter of Consent, Questionnaire, & Q-Sort

APPENDIX B

CONSENT LETTER



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
DEKALB, ILLINOIS 60115-2845
(815) 753-1619
FAX (815) 753-8594

Dear Middle School Teacher:

You are invited to participate in a research project under the administration of Jeanne Okrasinski, a doctoral candidate from Northern Illinois University. The purpose of this dissertation study is to discover if congruent/ diverse ideologies amongst teacher teams and schools relate to overall student achievement. Discovering different attributes of middle school teachers can assist in improving the teaming construction process, pre-service teacher development and continuing professional education of middle level teachers.

I will be asked to complete these components for the study:

- Complete the questionnaire concerning demographic information of a personal nature, including teacher team, grade level, current school assignment, number of years teaching and other such questions, exclusive of my name. *Although no questions are intended to be sensitive in nature, I may elect not to answer any questions if I so desire. Also, I may terminate my participation at any time with no prejudice or penalty.*
- Complete the survey about my curricular and educational beliefs as they apply to my middle school classroom.

Once the questionnaire and surveys are analyzed, the researcher will modify and code data that may be included in the study to assure confidentiality. Raw data will be destroyed after three years. Summary data will be retained for reanalysis of the data or future publication.

Participation is voluntary and I understand that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify Jeanne Okrasinski.

I thank you for your help and your enthusiasm for participating. Please feel free to contact me if I might be of service. Further questions about your rights related to participating in research studies are available from the Northern Illinois University Office of Research Compliance at 815-753-8588. I look forward to working with you on this project. Please be sure to sign below either to or not to participate in this study.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I have received a copy of this form.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

I do not wish to participate – Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration of this project,

Jeanne Okrasinski
Department of Teaching and Learning
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
815-748-3474 (home)
mrsokra@aol.com

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

Middle School Teacher Teaming Short Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this study! Please answer all questions since incomplete questionnaires will not be useable in the analysis of data. If you have any questions, please contact me at **mrsokra@aol.com**. Thank you again for your participation in this research project!

Team Name and Grade _____

School Name _____

Teaching Assignment [Subject(s)] _____

Your Age _____ (y) Total Years Teaching _____

Total Years Teaching in Dist. 205 _____

Years or Months at Current Assignment _____ (y) _____ (m)

Years or months you have been part of a teaching team _____ (y) _____ (m)

Years or months you have been on your current teaching team _____ (y) _____ (m)

Years or Months Current Team *Completely* Intact (same members) _____ (y) _____ (m)

Type of IL Certificate Currently Held (please mark all appropriate):

_____ 03 – Elementary _____ 09 – Secondary

Other _____ (IL type #)

Type of Teacher Training Program Completed:

_____ Elementary Ed _____ Secondary Ed _____ *Other

*If out of state program completed, please state grade span equivalency

APPENDIX D

STUDY Q-SORT

Educational Philosophy Q-Sort

Below you will find twenty statements which characterize our system of education. These statements are arranged in four categories. **Your task is to prioritize these statements by numbering them one to five *in each category*. Assign the number 5 to the statement you believe best represents your beliefs, 4 to the statement you believe represents your next strongest belief, and so on until you have numbered all five statements. Do this for each category.**

Please assign one number to each blank – you must decide on a number even if two answers sound equally as good!

I believe the goal of our education system should be:

- _____ A. To improve and reconstruct society; education for change.
- _____ B. To promote democratic, social living; to foster creative self-learning.
- _____ C. To educate the rational person; to cultivate the intellect through the transmission of worthwhile knowledge that has been gathered, organized and systematized.
- _____ D. To provide for the construction of active citizens; to nourish civic literacy, citizen participation, and political responsibility.
- _____ E. To promote the intellectual growth of the individual; to educate the competent person for the benefit of humanity.

What I teach students should:

- _____ A. Focus on skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate problems of society; active concern with contemporary and future society.
- _____ B. Focus on past and permanent studies, mastery of facts and universal truths.
- _____ C. Focus on restructuring a visionary language and public philosophy that puts equality, liberty, and human life at the center of the notions of democracy and citizenship.
- _____ D. Focus on growth and development; a living-learning process; active and relevant learning.
- _____ E. Focus on essential skills and academic subjects; mastery of concepts and principles of subject matter.

My role as a middle school teacher would be described as:

- _____ A. Teachers are critical intellectuals who create democratic sites for social transformation. They empower students to question how knowledge is produced and distributed.
- _____ B. Teachers serve as change agents for reform; they help students become aware of problems confronting humankind.
- _____ C. Teachers should help students think rationally; they should explicitly teach traditional values.
- _____ D. Teachers are guides for problem solving and scientific inquiry.
- _____ E. Teachers should act as authority figures who have expertise in subject fields or content areas.

Curriculum I teach should

- _____ A. Center around classical subjects, literary analysis. It is constant.
- _____ B. Center on social critique and social change dedicated to self and social empowerment.
- _____ C. Center around essential skills (three Rs) and major content subjects (English, Science, Math, History).
- _____ D. Center on the examination of social, economic, and political problems, present and future, on a national as well as international level.
- _____ E. Center on student interests, involving the application of learning to human problems; subject matter is interdisciplinary.

Thank you again for participating in my research study!

Jeanne Okrasinski

APPENDIX E

ORIGINAL Q-SORT

Educational Philosophy Q-Sort

Below you will find twenty statements which characterize our system of education. These statements are arranged in four categories. Assign numbers 5 to 1 for each statement in each category; 5 being your strongest belief down to 1, your weakest belief.

Aims

- _____ A. To improve and reconstruct society; education for change.
- _____ B. To promote democratic, social living; to foster creative self-learning.
- _____ C. To educate the rational person; to cultivate the intellect through the transmission of worthwhile knowledge that has been gathered, organized and systematized.
- _____ D. To provide for the construction of active citizens; to nourish civic literacy, citizen participation, and political responsibility.
- _____ E. To promote the intellectual growth of the individual; to educate the competent person for the benefit of humanity.

Goals

- _____ A. Focus on skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate problems of society; active concern with contemporary and future society.
- _____ B. Focus on past and permanent studies, mastery of facts and universal truths.
- _____ C. Focus on restructuring a visionary language and public philosophy that puts equality, liberty, and human life at the center of the notions of democracy and citizenship.
- _____ D. Focus on growth and development; a living-learning process; active and relevant learning.
- _____ E. Focus on essential skills and academic subjects; mastery of concepts and principles of subject matter.

Role of Teacher

- _____ A. Teachers are critical intellectuals who create democratic sites for social transformation. They empower students to question how knowledge is produced and distributed.
- _____ B. Teachers serve as change agents for reform; they help students become aware of problems confronting humankind.
- _____ C. Teachers should help students think rationally; they should explicitly teach traditional values.
- _____ D. Teachers are guides for problem solving and scientific inquiry.
- _____ E. Teachers should act as authority figures who have expertise in subject fields or content areas.

Curriculum

- _____ A. Center around classical subjects, literary analysis. It is constant.
- _____ B. Center on social critique and social change dedicated to self and social empowerment.
- _____ C. Center around essential skills (three Rs) and major content subjects (English, Science, Math, History).
- _____ D. Center on the examination of social, economic, and political problems, present and future, on a national as well as international level.
- _____ E. Center on student interests, involving the application of learning to human problems; subject matter is interdisciplinary.

APPENDIX F

Q-SORT SCORING GUIDE

Question #	Ortho	RH	Prog	Recon	CT
1 – aims	C	E	B	A	D
2 – goals	B	E	D	A	C
3 – Teacher role	C	E	D	B	A
4 – curriculum	A	C	E	D	B

APPENDIX G

MAP OF SCHOOL LOCATIONS

